FORT NAVAJO a Lieutenant Blueberry adventure

dargaud presents

Lieutenant

BLUEBERRY

FORT NAVAJO

Charlier & Giraud

EGMONT/MEPHUIEN

Charlier & Giraud

Lieutenant BLUEBERRY

FORT NAVAJO

Translated by Anthea Bell and Derek Hockridge

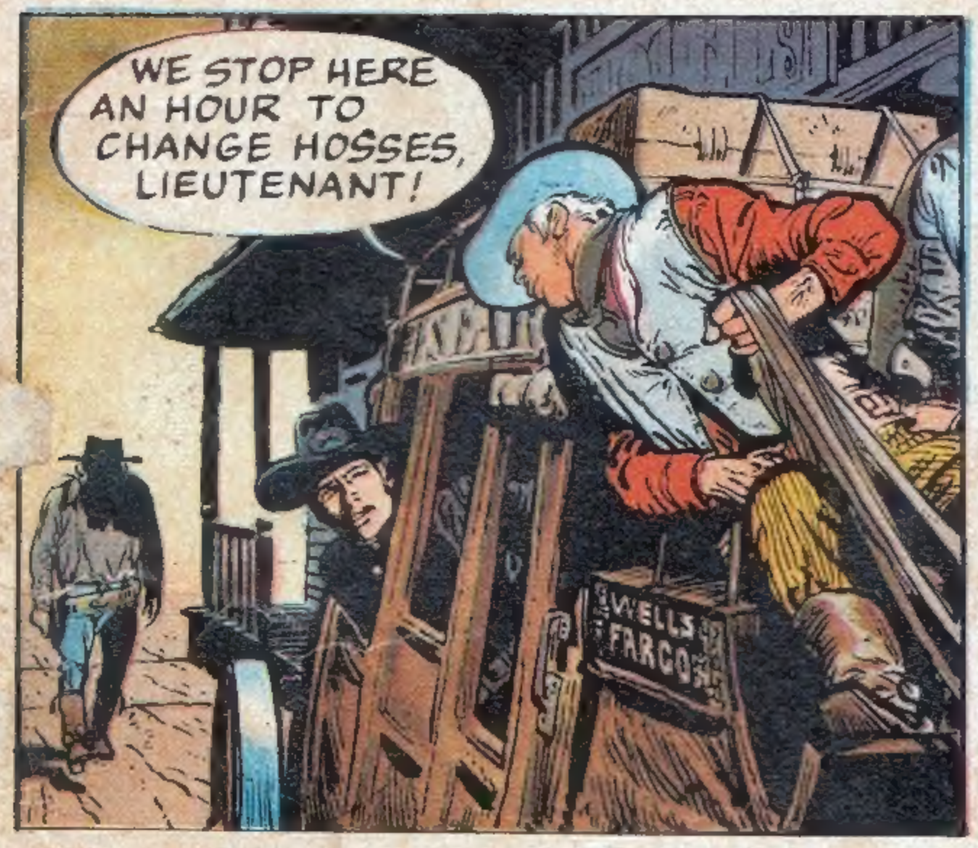
EGMONT/METHUEN

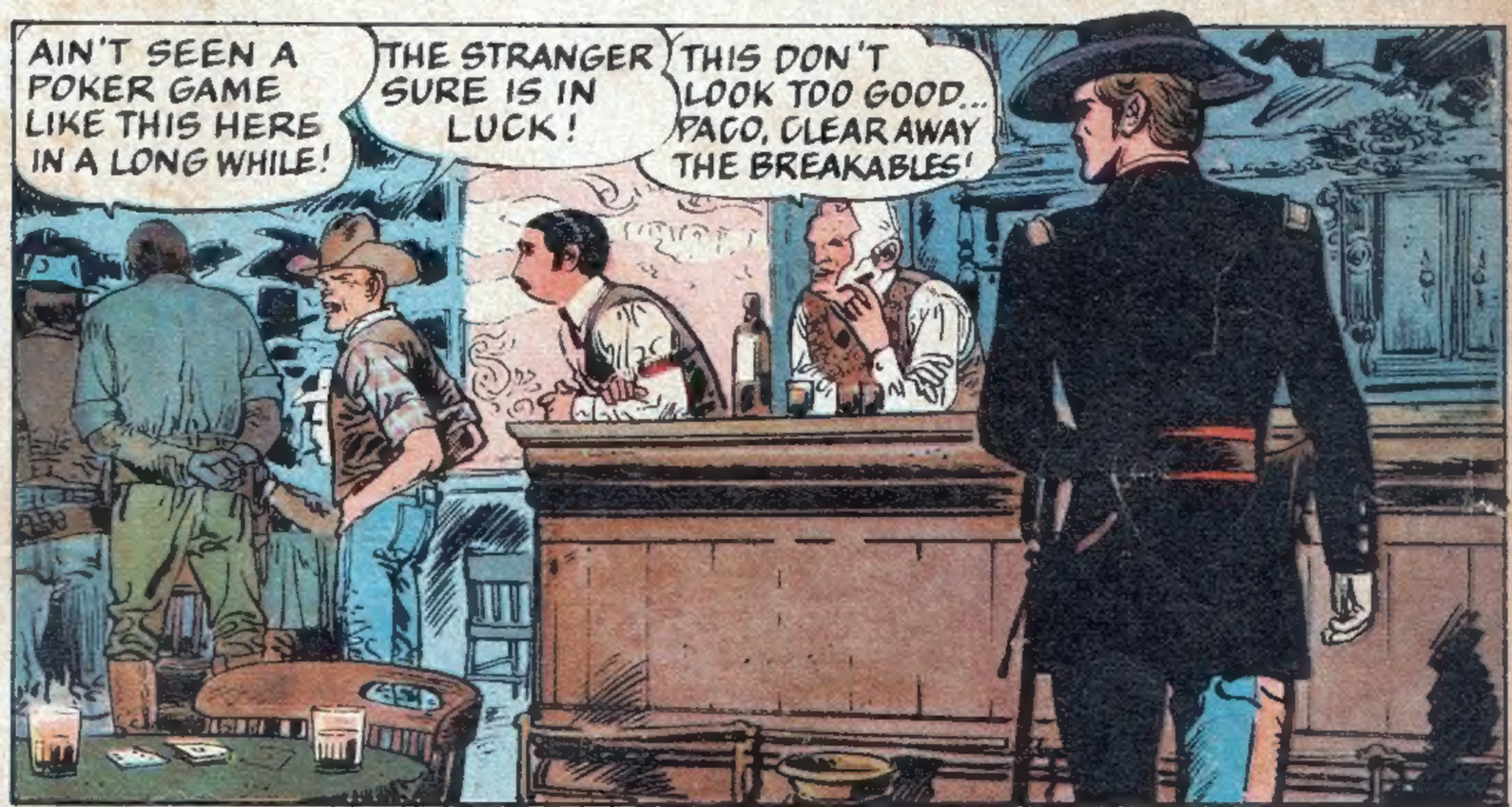
FORT NAVAJO

STORY BY J.M. CHARLIER
PICTURES BY GIRAUD

ONE AFTERNOON IN A SMALL PIONEER TOWN ON THE BORDER OF ARIZONA AND NEW MEXICO...

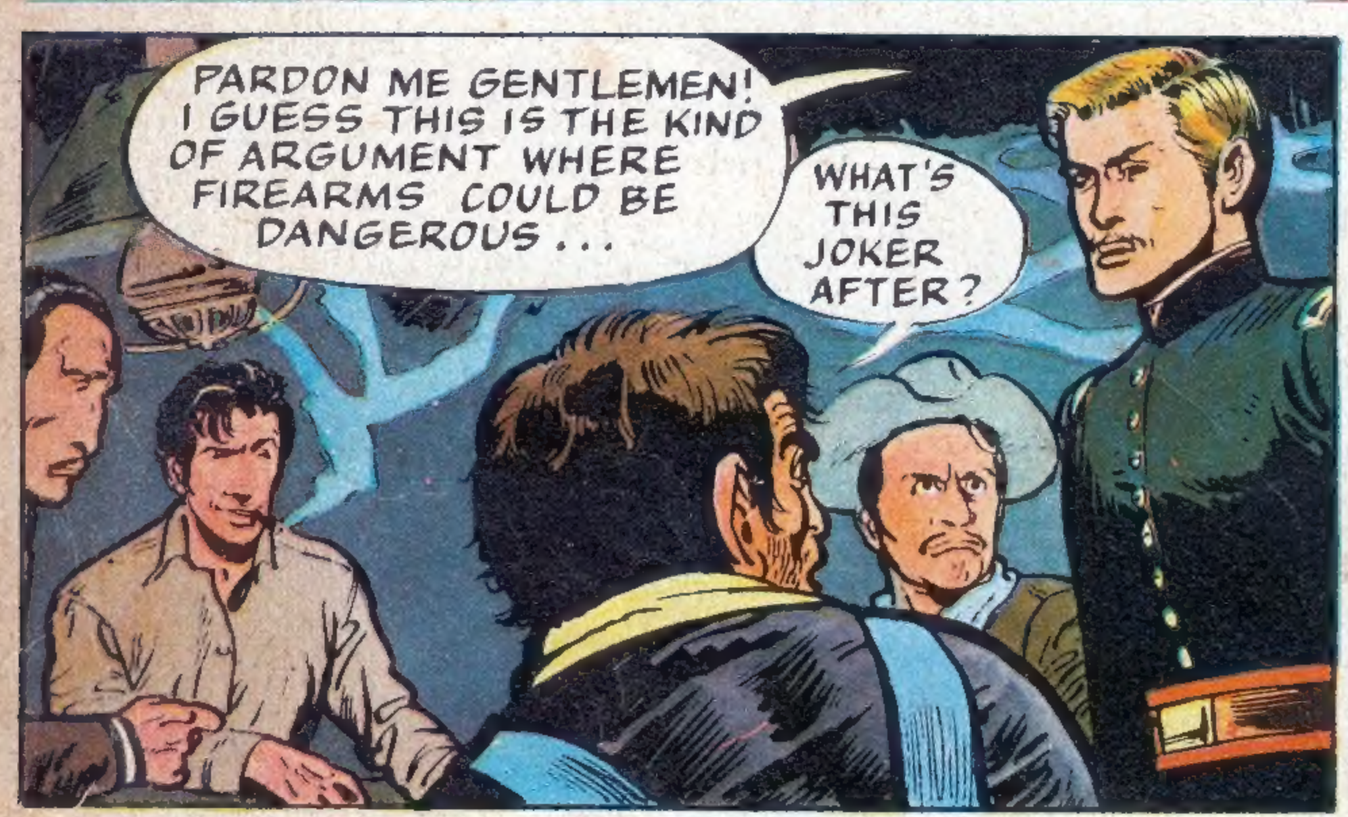
HEY, PETE! GET OUT THE HOSSES! THE WELLS FARGO STAGE IS A-COMIN!





WE DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO CARD-SHARPERS AROUND HERE, GRINGO!
YOU LET THAT MONEY ALONE! COULD BURN YOUR FIN-GERS...
GO AHEAD, BUTCH ... SHOW HIM!

BAD LOSERS? DEAR, DEAR!
HELL, I CAN'T LET THEM MURDER THE MAN! THEY'RE THREE TO ONE!

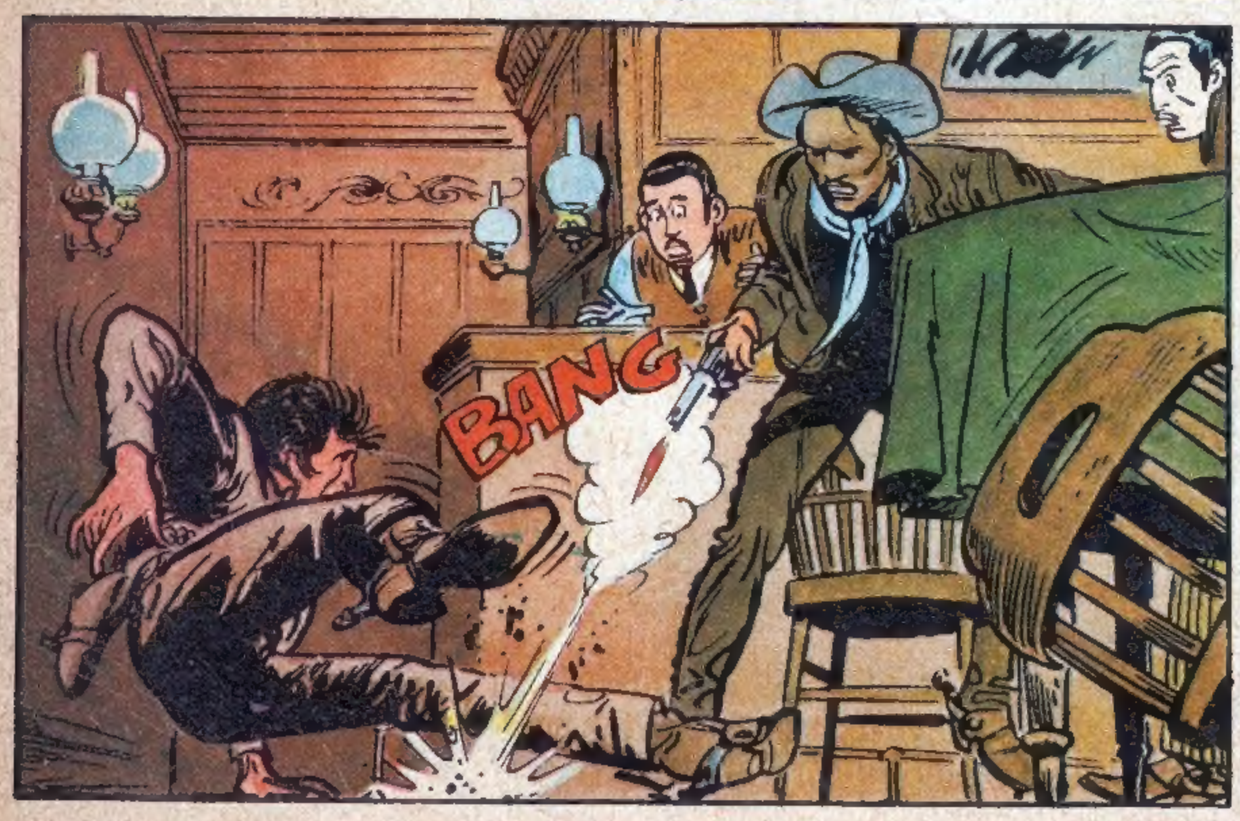

PARDON ME GENTLEMEN! I GUESS THIS IS THE KIND OF ARGUMENT WHERE FIREARMS COULD BE DANGEROUS...
WHAT'S THIS JOKER AFTER?

DIRTY YANK!
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS, WHY DON'T YOU? GO RATTLE YOUR SABER SOME PLACE ELSE!

PATCH

YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT, YANKEE!

SUDDENLY, QUICK AS LIGHTNING, THE STRANGER TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE DIVERSION...
CUIDADO! THE GRINGO! AY... HIJO DE ...


BANG

DZOING!!
PANG!

I WILL SHOOT THE FIRST MAN WHO MOVES! NOW, HAND OVER YOUR WEAPONS!

YOU WILL REGRET MESSING WITH BUTCH MORAN, RAT-FACE! I'LL SEARCH YOU OUT AND DEAL WITH YOU LATER!
I CAN'T HARDLY WAIT! I'LL PUT UP A BIG SIGN!

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP, LIEUTENANT! WILL YOU LET ME BUY YOU A DRINK?!
SURE THING!

GIVE ME A MINUTE WHILE I COLLECT MY WINNINGS FIRST! NOT BAD, CONSIDERING I STARTED WITH ONLY A DOLLAR!
LEMONADE PLEASE!

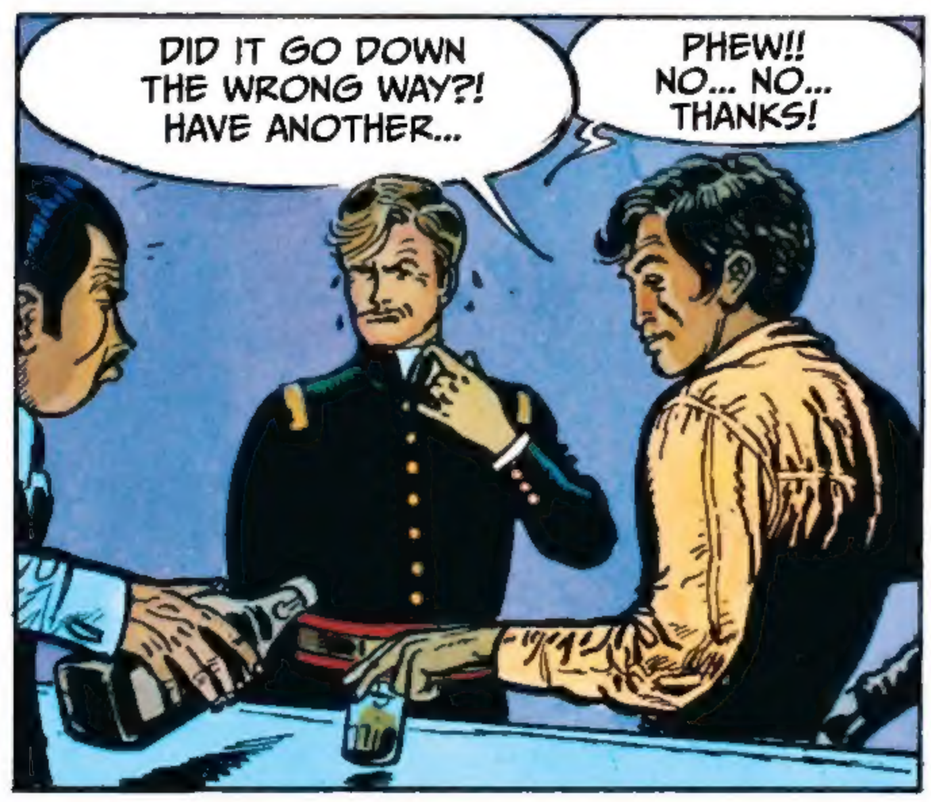
SORRY! WE DON'T KEEP IT!
OH! EH... ICED TEA THEN!

MAMMA MIA! NO ICED TEA EITHER!
WHAT ABOUT GINGER BEER?!

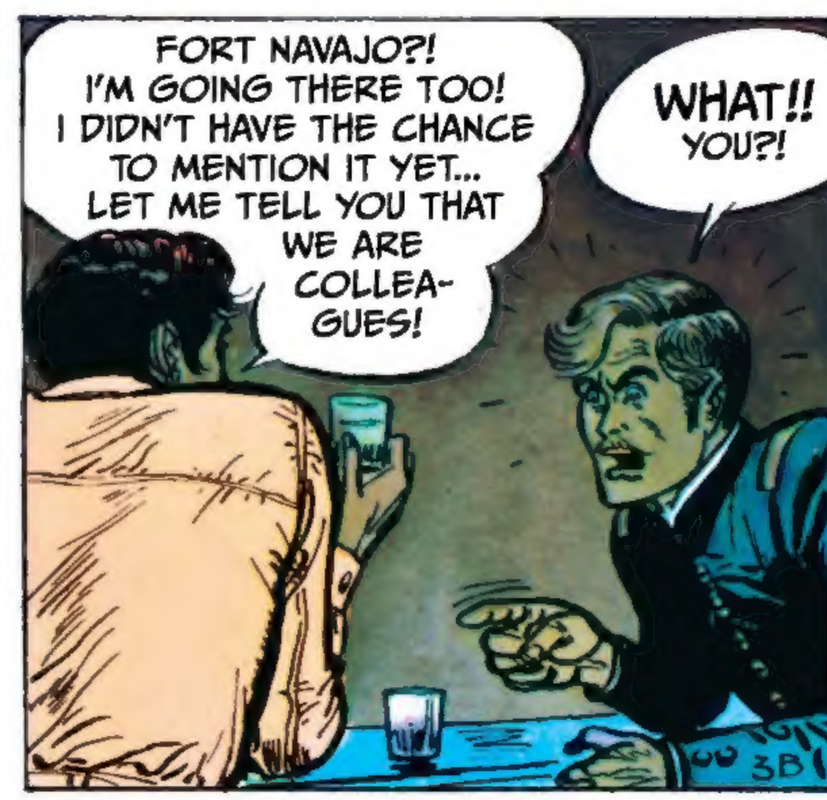
LOOK... THERE IS NO ICED TEA, GINGER BEER OR MILK! EVERYONE DRINKS WHISKEY AROUND HERE!
WHISKEY IT IS, THEN!

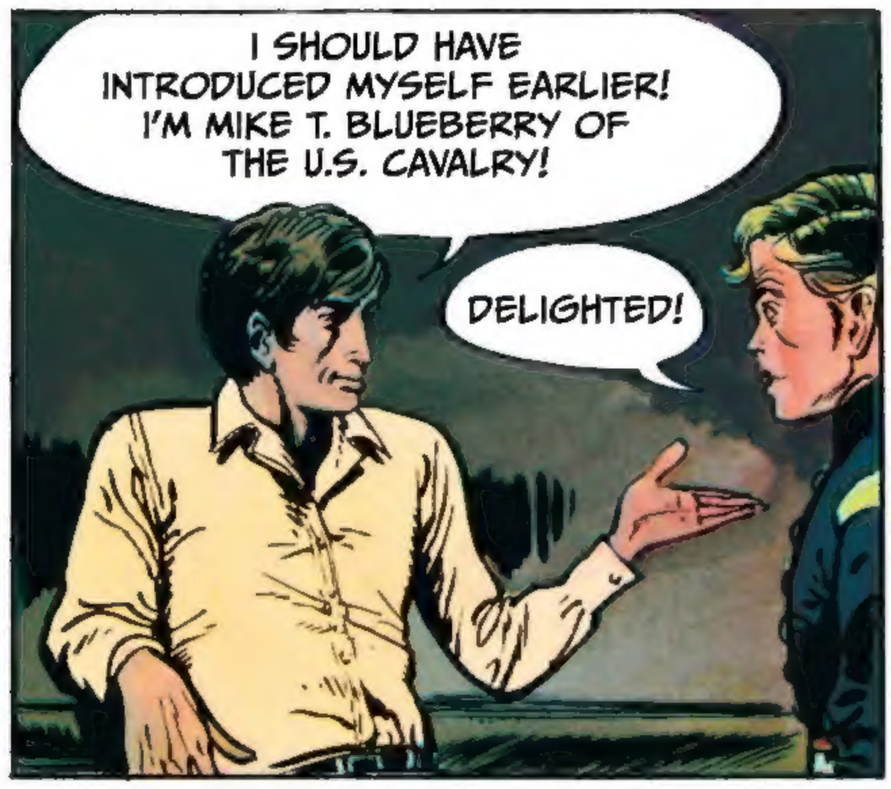
THAT'S THE SOFTEST BREW I'M GIVING YOU! THE KIND THE LADIES DRANK!
YOUR HEALTH!
AND YOURS!

PWA!

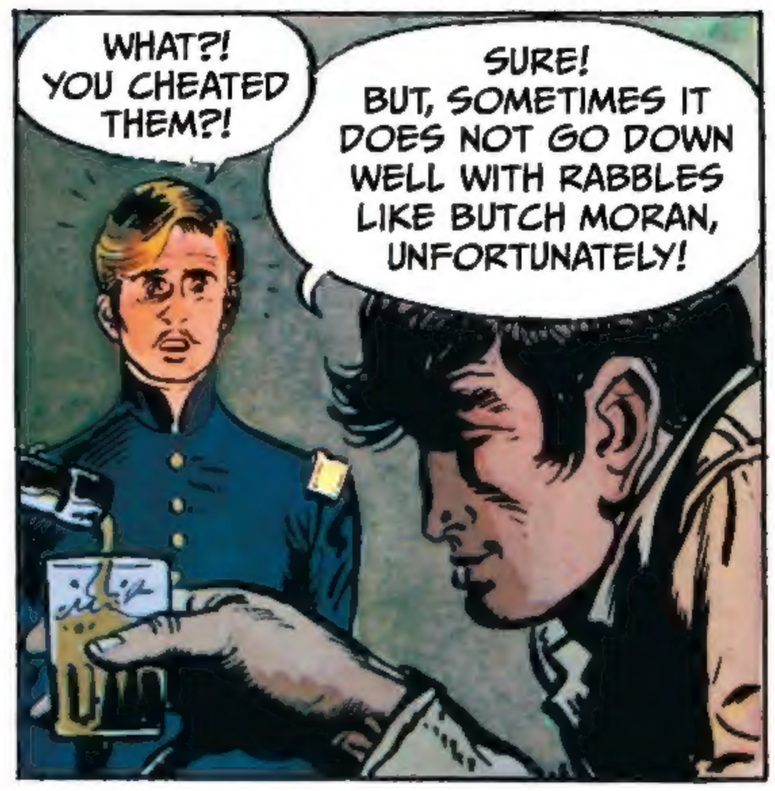

DID IT GO DOWN THE WRONG WAY?! HAVE ANOTHER...
PHEW!! NO... NO... THANKS!

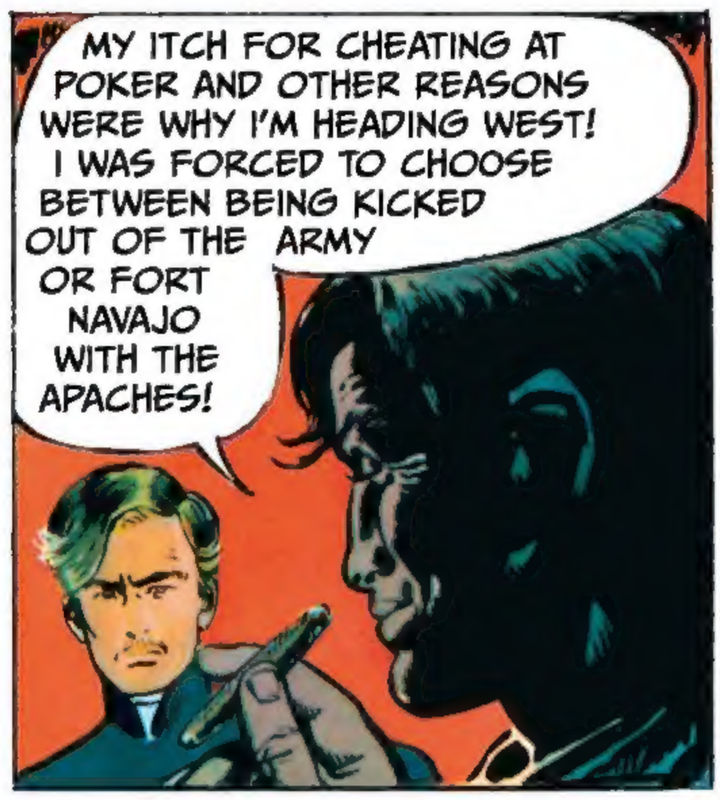
WHERE ARE YOU HEADING... LIEUTENANT?!
TO FORT NAVAJO... ON THE EDGE OF THE APACHE TERRITORY! IT'S MY FIRST ASSIGNMENT SINCE I GRADUATED FROM WEST POINT!


FORT NAVAJO?! I'M GOING THERE TOO! I DIDN'T HAVE THE CHANCE TO MENTION IT YET... LET ME TELL YOU THAT WE ARE COLLEAGUES!
WHAT!! YOU?!

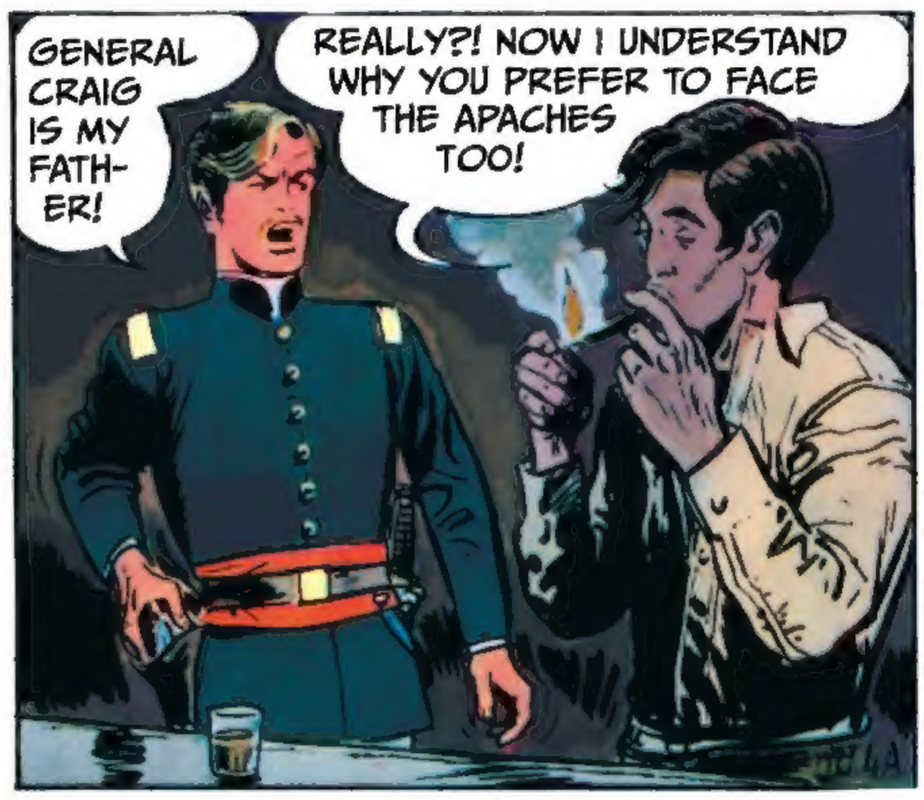

I SHOULD HAVE INTRODUCED MYSELF EARLIER! I'M MIKE T. BLUEBERRY OF THE U.S. CAVALRY!
DELIGHTED!

BUT, THEN... WHERE ARE YOUR UNIFORMS?!
I NEVER WEAR 'EM WHEN I'M TRAVELLING! IT'S EASIER TO CHEAT FOLKS AT POKER!


WHAT?! YOU CHEATED THEM?!
SURE! BUT, SOMETIMES IT DOES NOT GO DOWN WELL WITH RABBLES LIKE BUTCH MORAN, UNFORTUNATELY!


MY ITCH FOR CHEATING AT POKER AND OTHER REASONS WERE WHY I'M HEADING WEST! I WAS FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN BEING KICKED OUT OF THE ARMY OR FORT NAVAJO WITH THE APACHES!

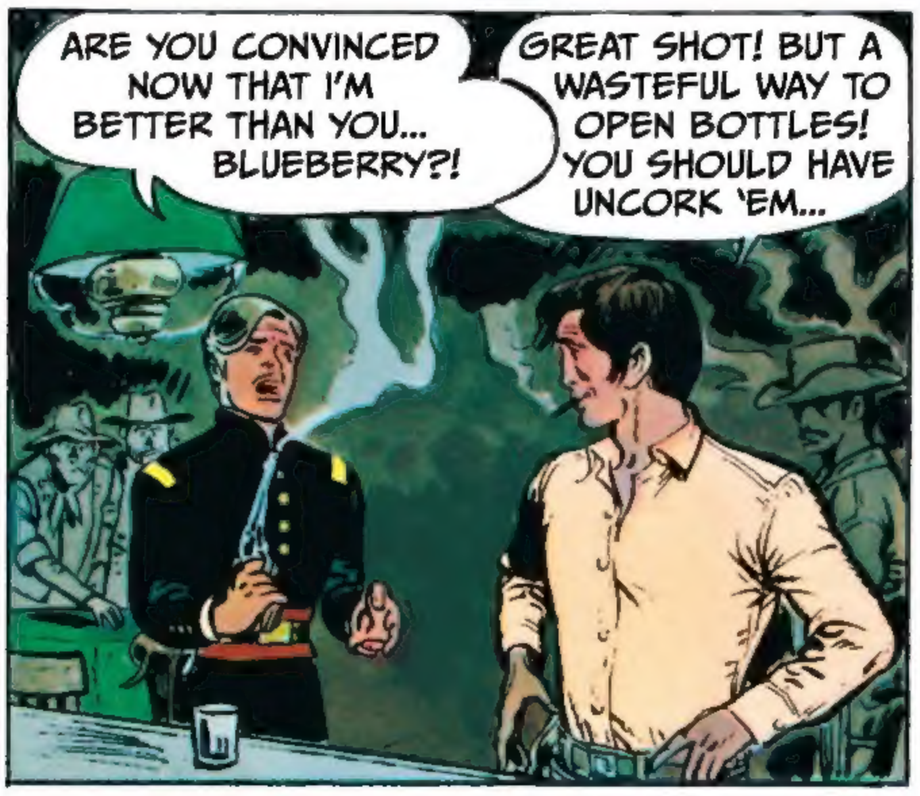
SO I CHOSE TO COME WEST... ALL BECAUSE OF A POMPOUS OLD FOOL CALLED GENERAL CRAIG! HE DIDN'T APPRECIATE MY SENSE OF HUMOUR!
WHAT?!!


GENERAL CRAIG IS MY FATH-ER!
REALLY?! NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU PREFER TO FACE THE APACHES TOO!

SHUT UP AND DEFEND YOURSELF... BLUEBERRY! I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU EAT YOUR INSULTS!
TAKE IT EASY! I APOLOGISE...

...NOT BECAUSE I'M SCARED OF YOU! I'M PROBABLY MUCH BETTER WITH A GUN AND I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU!
SO YOU THINK YOU'RE BETTER?!

WATCH THIS!!
BAM!
NOT AGAIN!


ARE YOU CONVINCED NOW THAT I'M BETTER THAN YOU... BLUEBERRY?!
GREAT SHOT! BUT A WASTEFUL WAY TO OPEN BOTTLES! YOU SHOULD HAVE UNCORK 'EM...

BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
...LIKE THIS!

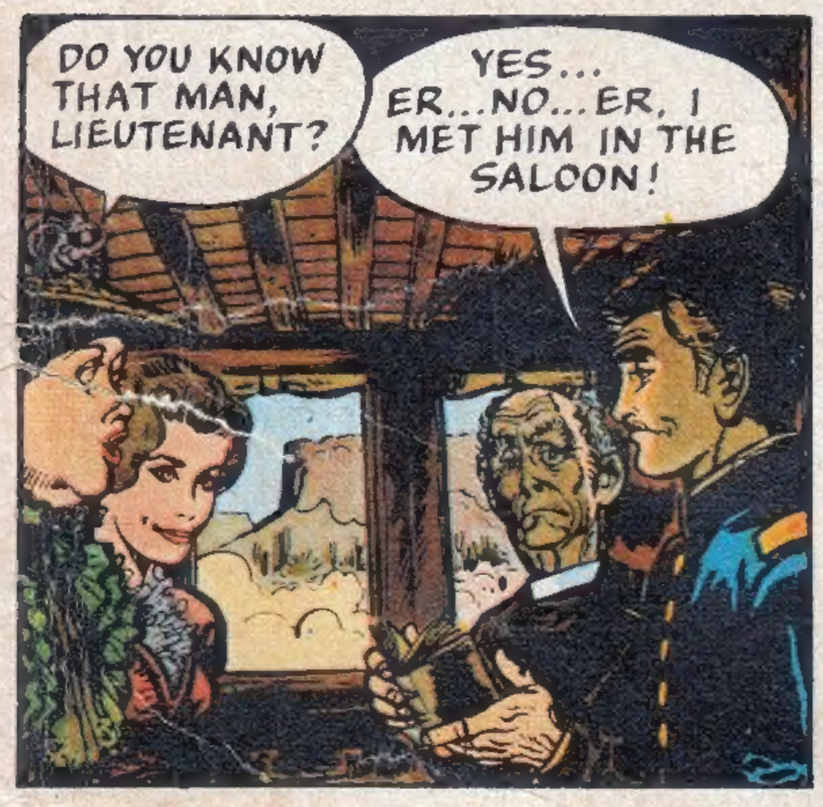
OH, COME CRAIG! I'M NOT ABOUT TO FIGHT YOU... LET'S SHAKE HANDS!
I... ER... I...
LIEUTENANT!

YOU WANT TO BOARD THE STAGE, YOU'LL HAVE TO GIT MOVIN'... WE GOT SOME NEW PASSENGERS. TWO LADIES, AND THEY'RE IN A HURRY!

COMING, NEIL!
SEE YOU IN FORT NAVAJO, CRAIG! I'LL BE THERE AHEAD OF YOU... I CAN BUY ME A HORSE NOW!
PHEW!

HOW ABOUT THE BREAKAGES?
THEY'RE ON ME... SAME AS THE DRINK I'M STANDING ALL THESE GENTLEMEN WHILE I BUY A HORSE...

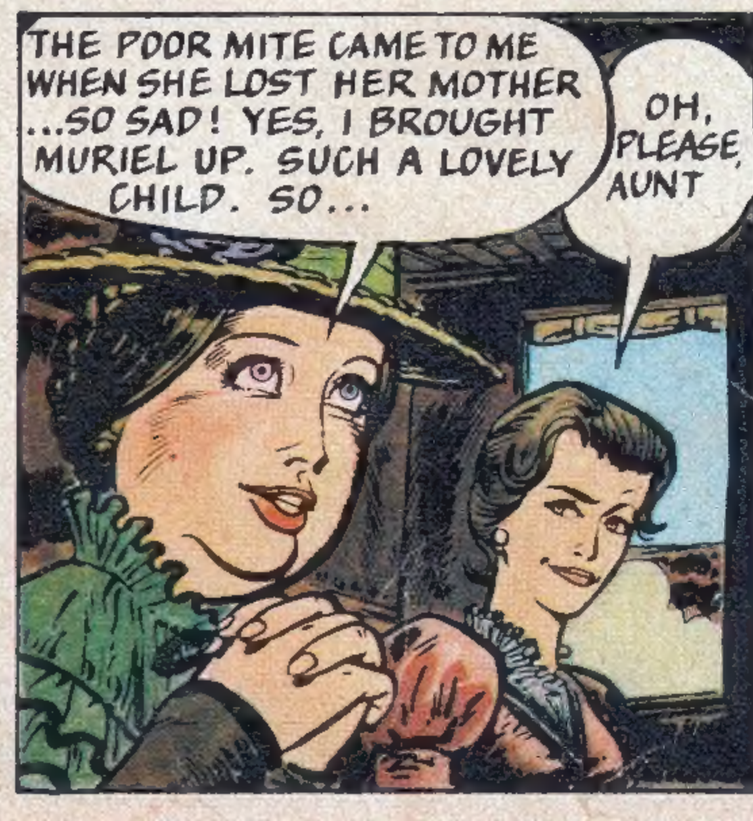
AN HOUR LATER ON THE FORT NAVAJO TRAIL...
BUFFOON!
HELLO THERE, LIEUTENANT! IT'S ME AGAIN... I'LL LET THE APACHES KNOW YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY!


DO YOU KNOW THAT MAN, LIEUTENANT?
YES... ER...NO...ER, I MET HIM IN THE SALOON!

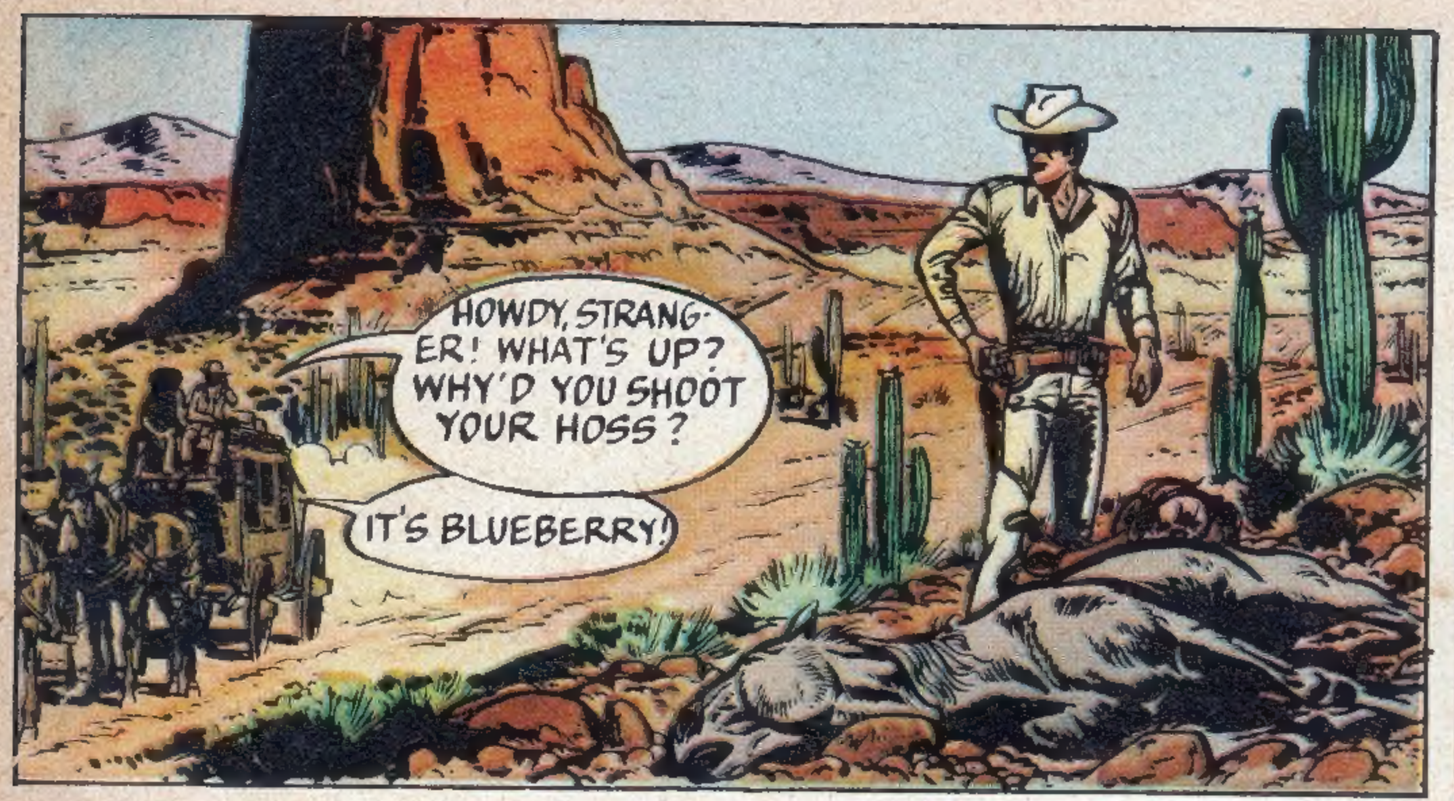
YOU FREQUENT SALOONS??!!
WHAT? I...ER... NO, NO! I MEAN, I SAW HIM COMING OUT!

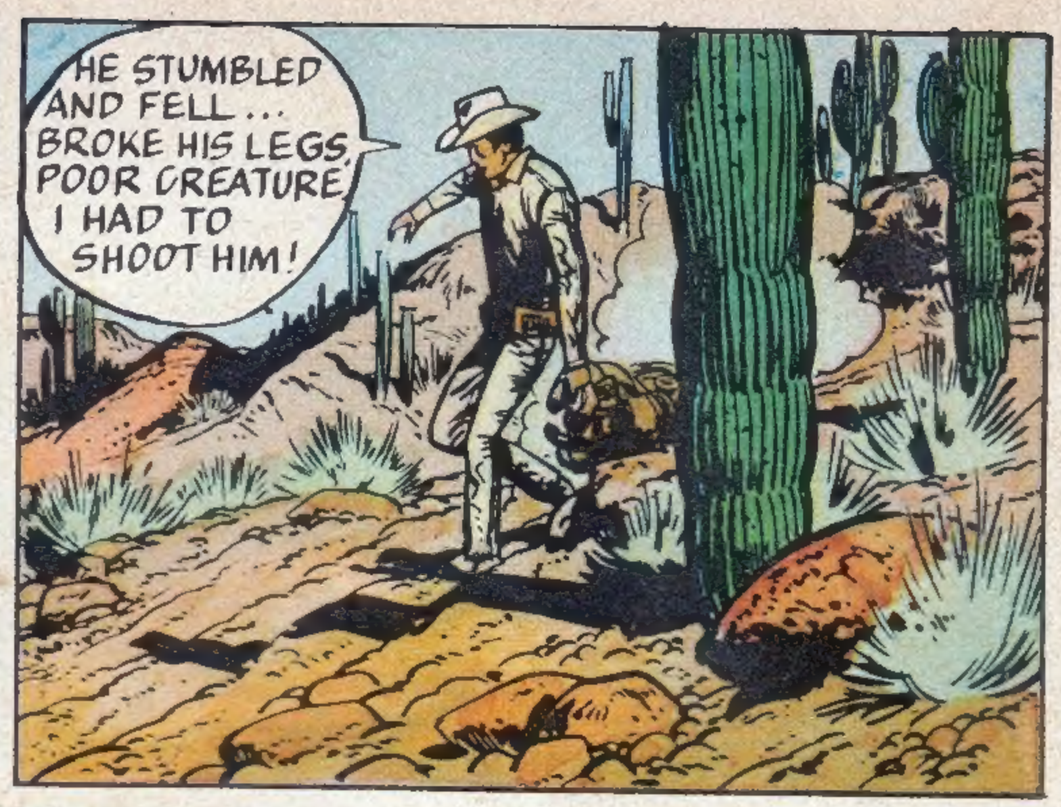
I CERTAINLY WOULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED GENERAL CRAIG'S SON TO...WELL, WHAT LUCK YOU'RE BOUND FOR FORT NAVAJO TOO!
WHY, YES! INCREDIBLE LUCK!

I'D NO IDEA MY COMMANDING OFFICER HAD SUCH A LOVELY DAUGHTER!
NOR HAS HE! MY BROTHER HASN'T SEEN MURIEL IN FIFTEEN YEARS!

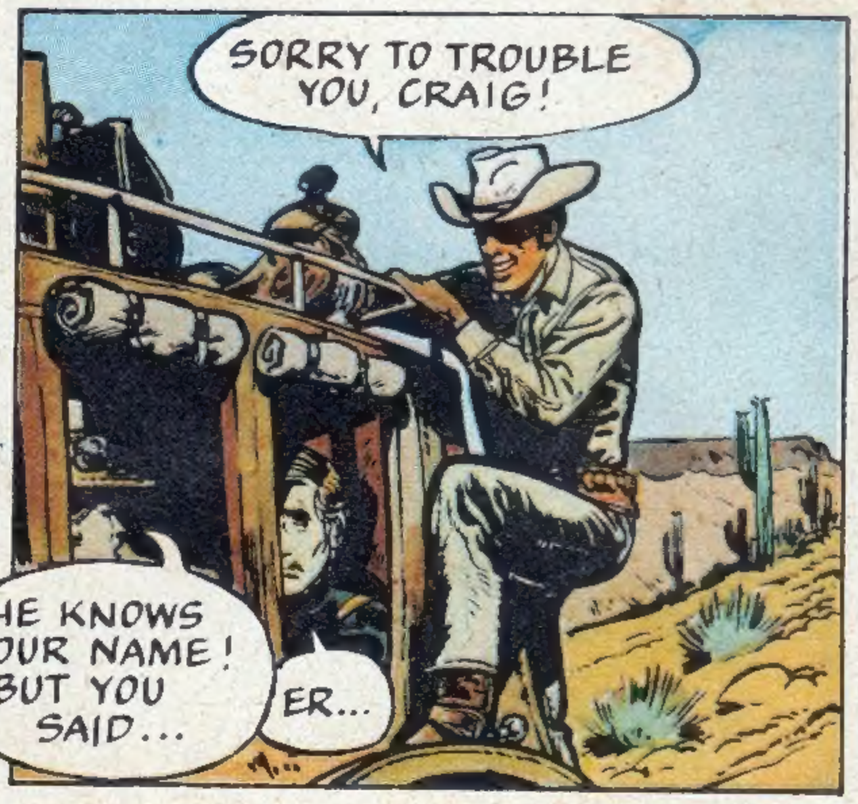

THE POOR MITE CAME TO ME WHEN SHE LOST HER MOTHER ...SO SAD! YES, I BROUGHT MURIEL UP. SUCH A LOVELY CHILD. SO...
OH, PLEASE, AUNT

BUT I'M SORRY TO SAY MY NIECE HAS RUN CRAZY! NOTHING WILL DO BUT SHE MUST JOIN HER FATHER AT FORT NAVAJO! I GAVE IN, BUT...
POW!
WHAT'S GOING ON?


HOWDY, STRANGER! WHAT'S UP? WHY'D YOU SHOOT YOUR HOSS?
IT'S BLUEBERRY!

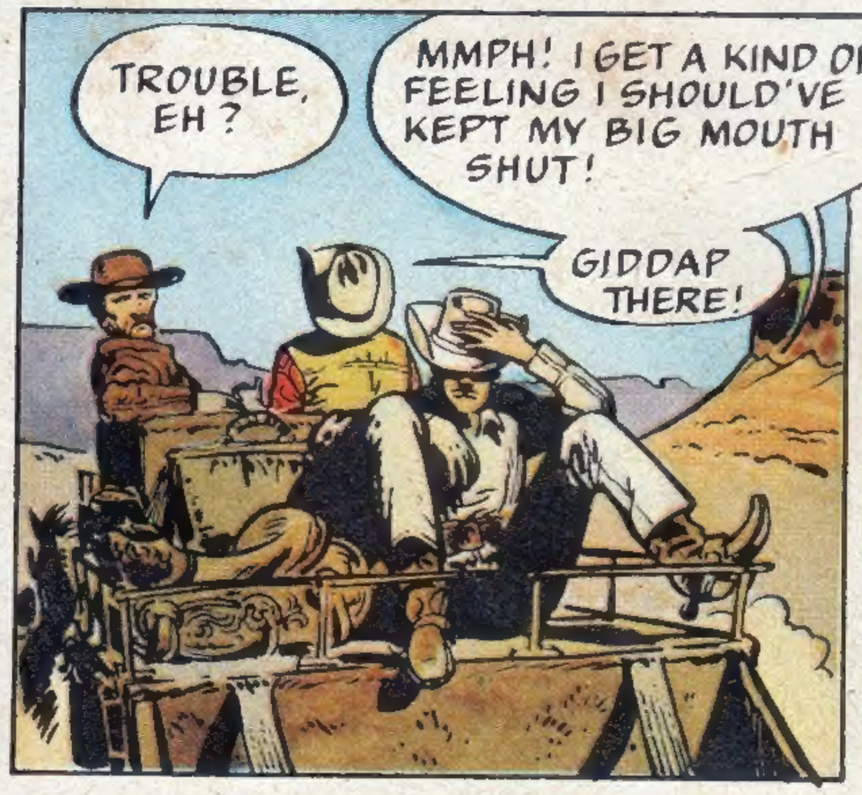

HE STUMBLED AND FELL... BROKE HIS LEGS, POOR CREATURE. I HAD TO SHOOT HIM!

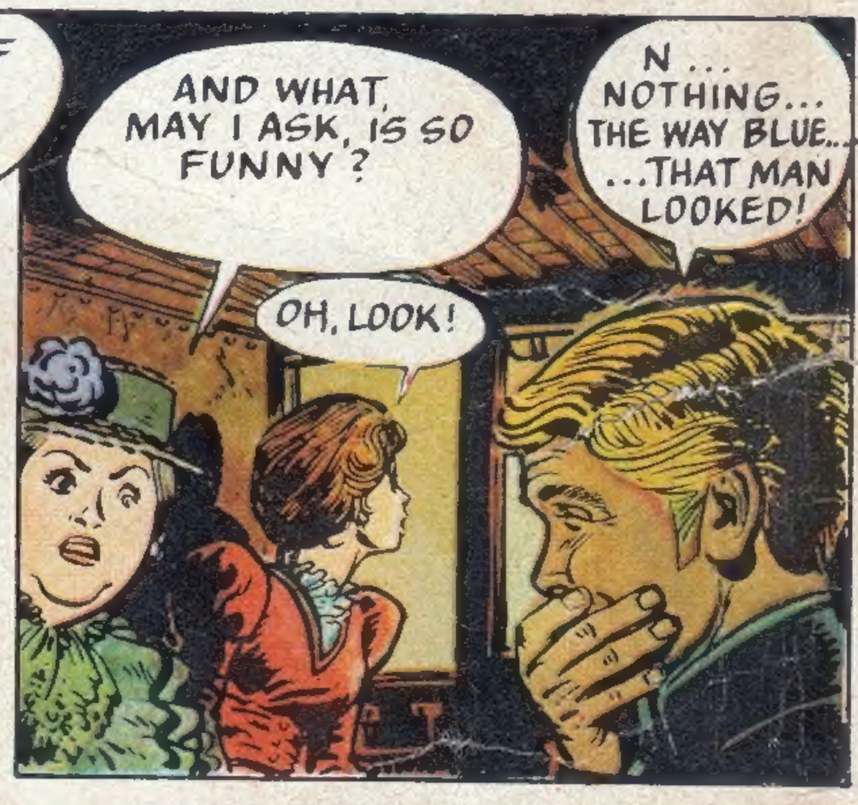
GOT ANY ROOM?
WE'RE FULL INSIDE...YOU CAN COME UP HERE WITH THE BAGGAGE.

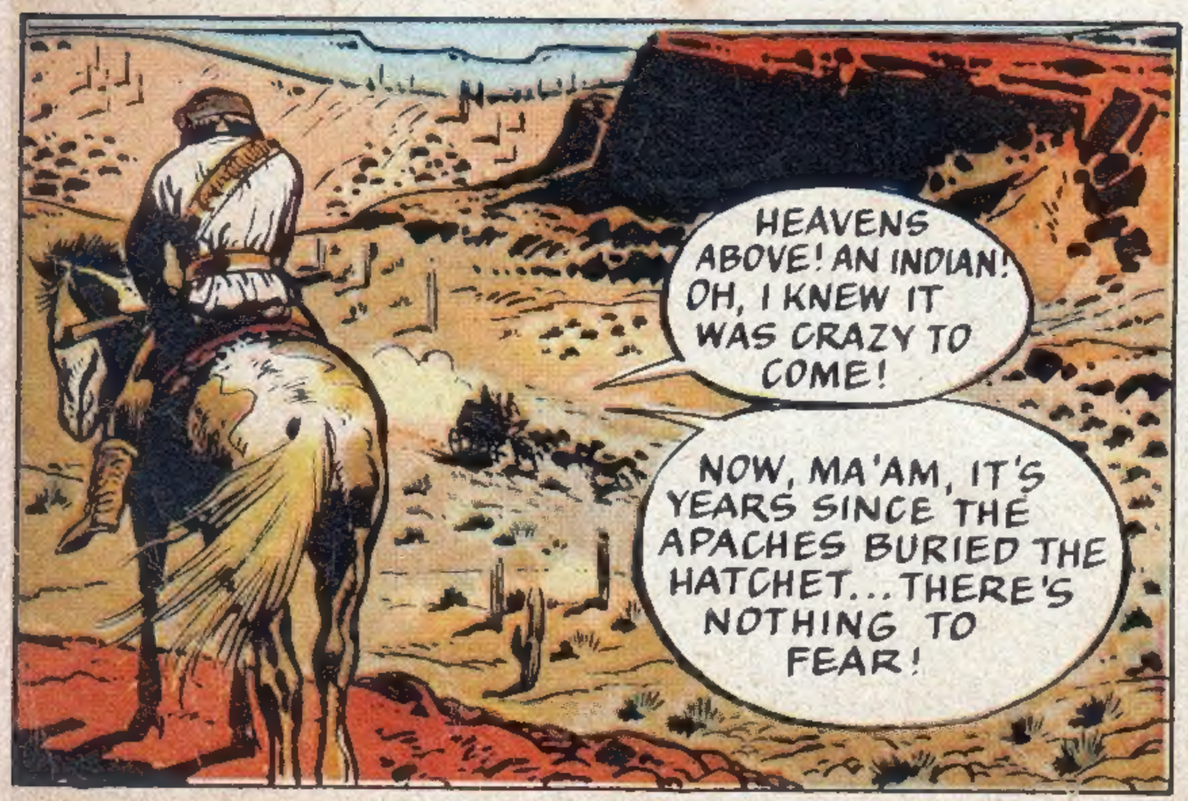

SORRY TO TROUBLE YOU, CRAIG!
HE KNOWS YOUR NAME! BUT YOU SAID...
ER...

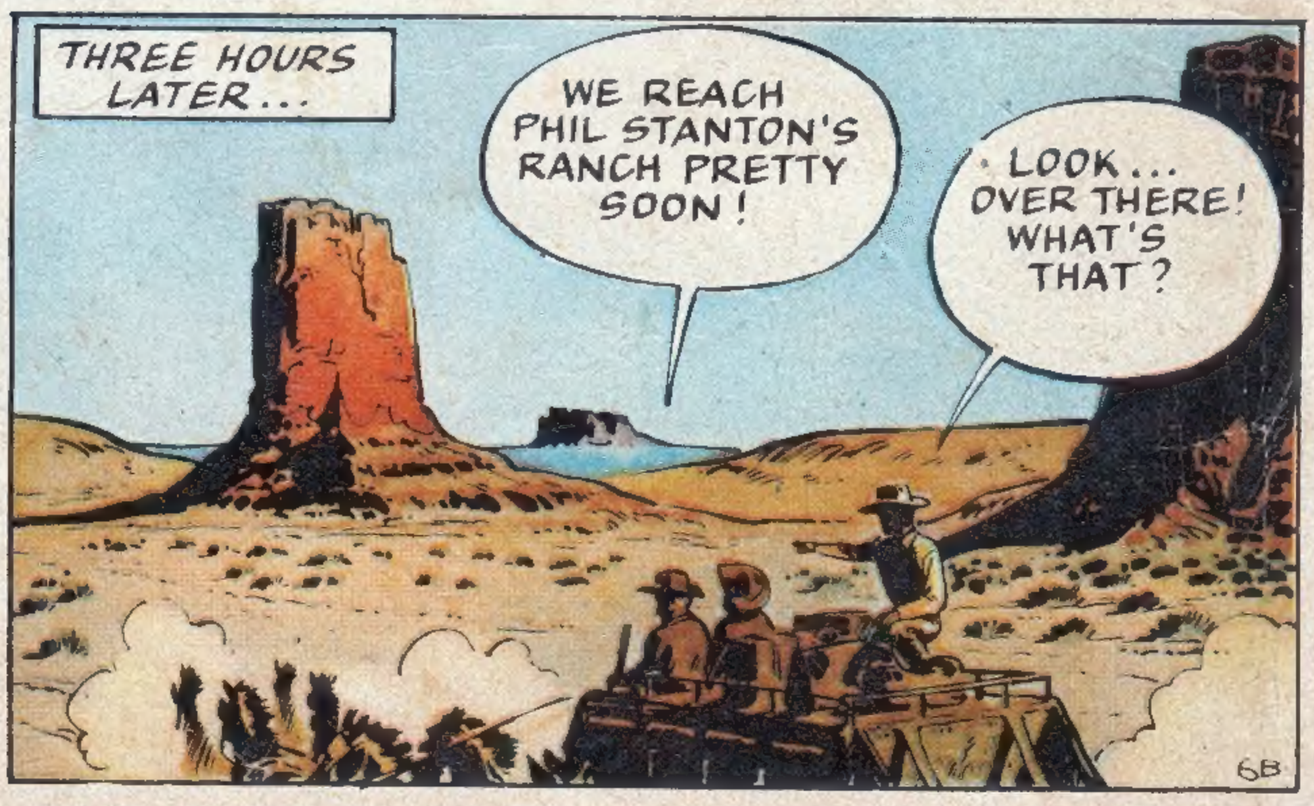
WE'RE DRINKING COMPANIONS, MA'AM, THAT'S ALL! HEY, CONGRATULATIONS, CRAIG! YOU GOT SOME PRETTY COMPANY IN THERE! I SEE YOU DON'T WASTE TIME!
REALLY!

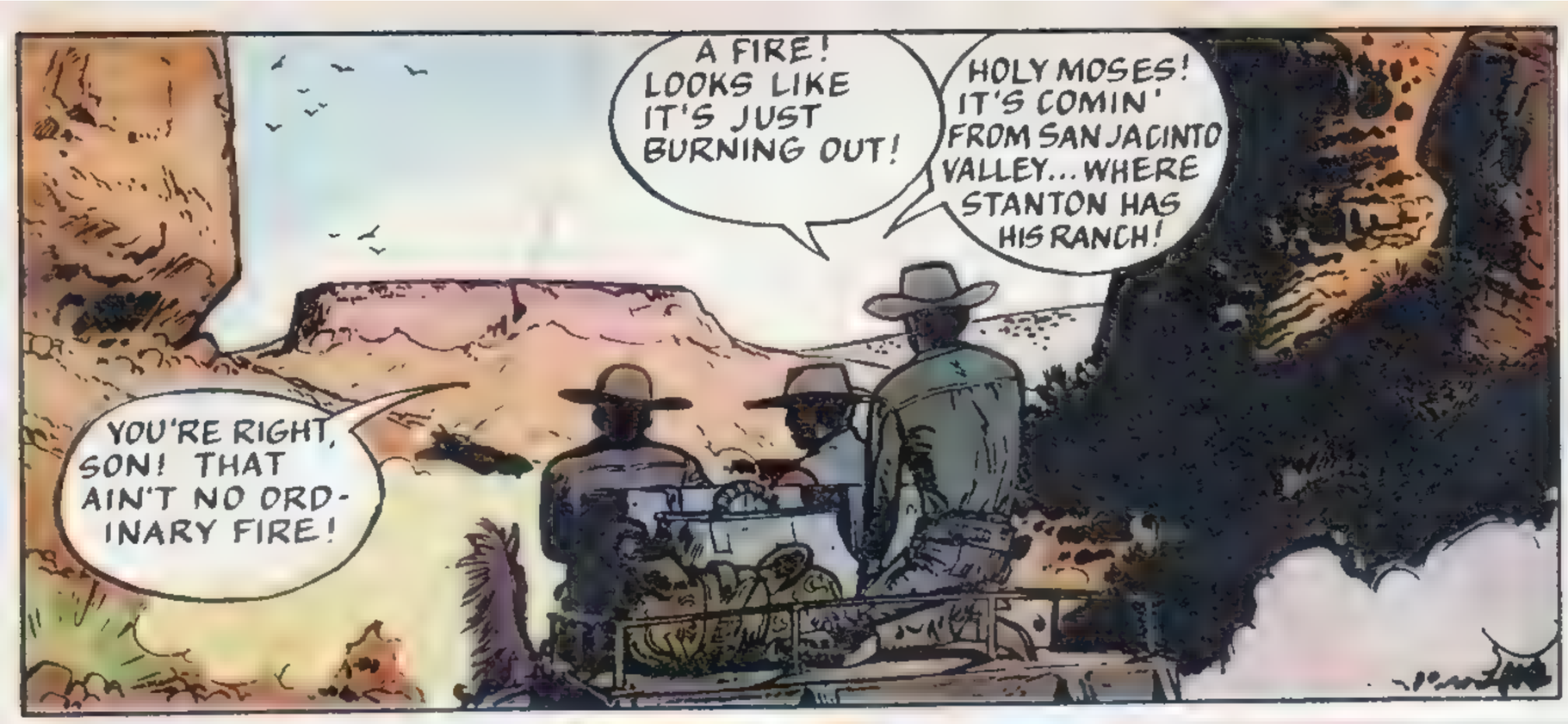
YOU LISTEN TO ME, YOUNG MAN! COLONEL DICKSON OF FORT NAVAJO IS MY BROTHER, AND THIS IS HIS DAUGHTER, AND LET ME TELL YOU, I'M COMPLAINING TO THE COLONEL!!!


TROUBLE, EH?
MMPH! I GET A KIND OF FEELING I SHOULD'VE KEPT MY BIG MOUTH SHUT!
GIDDAP THERE!

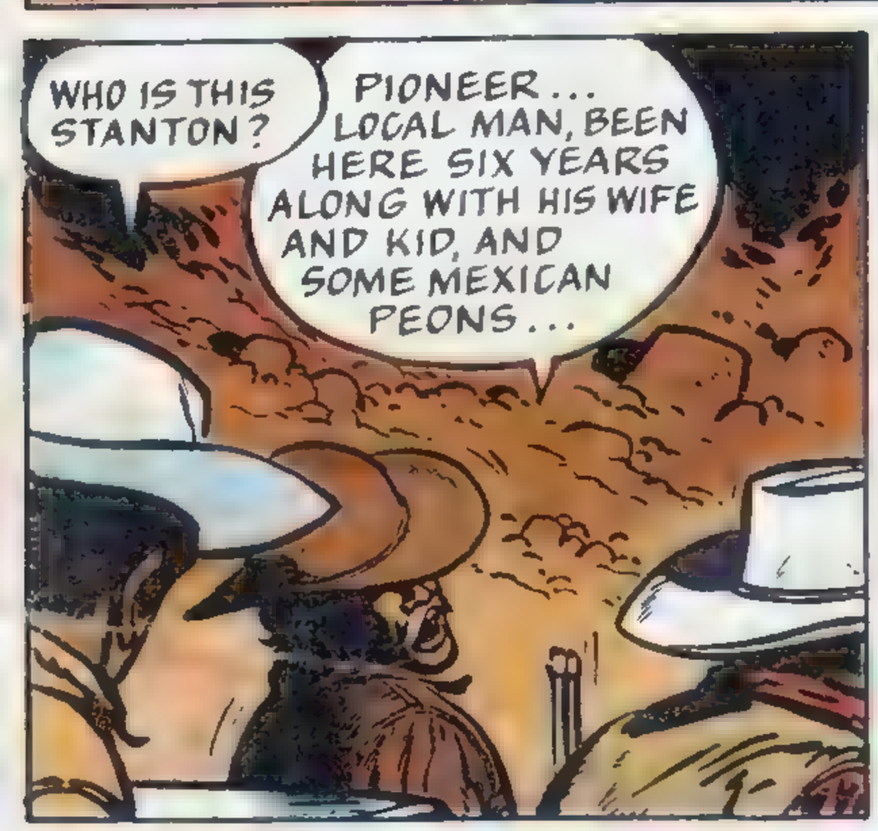

AND WHAT, MAY I ASK, IS SO FUNNY?
N... NOTHING... THE WAY BLUE... ...THAT MAN LOOKED!
OH, LOOK!

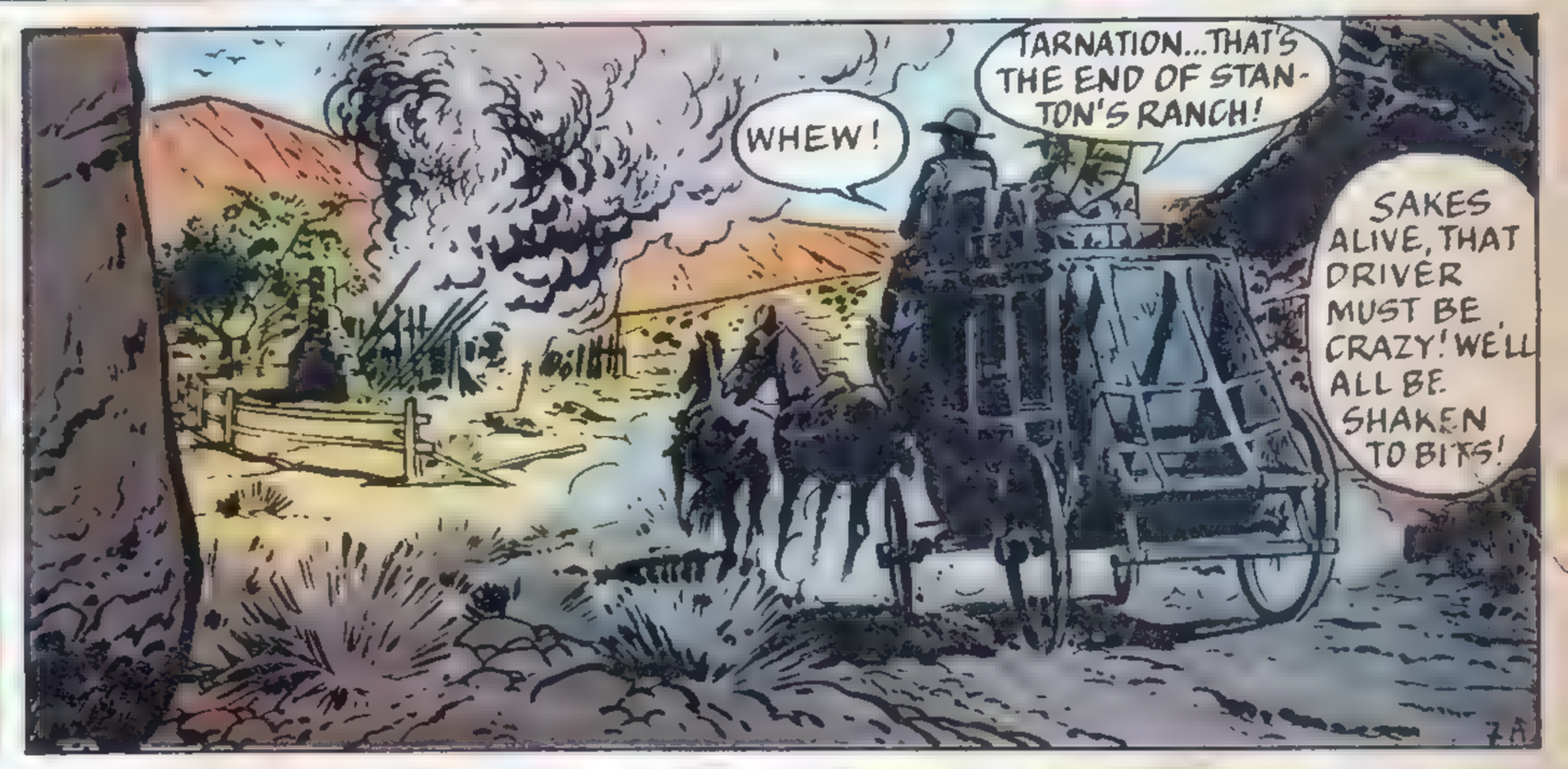

HEAVENS ABOVE! AN INDIAN! OH, I KNEW IT WAS CRAZY TO COME!
NOW, MA'AM, IT'S YEARS SINCE THE APACHES BURIED THE HATCHET...THERE'S NOTHING TO FEAR!

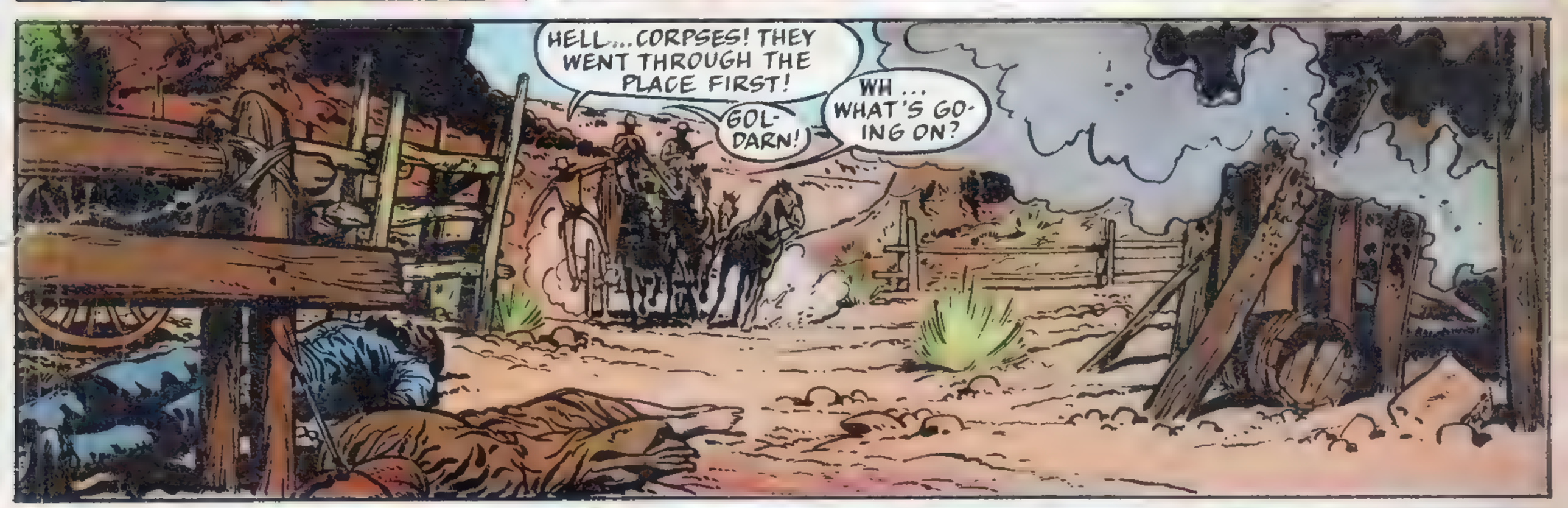

THREE HOURS LATER...
WE REACH PHIL STANTON'S RANCH PRETTY SOON!
LOOK... OVER THERE! WHAT'S THAT?

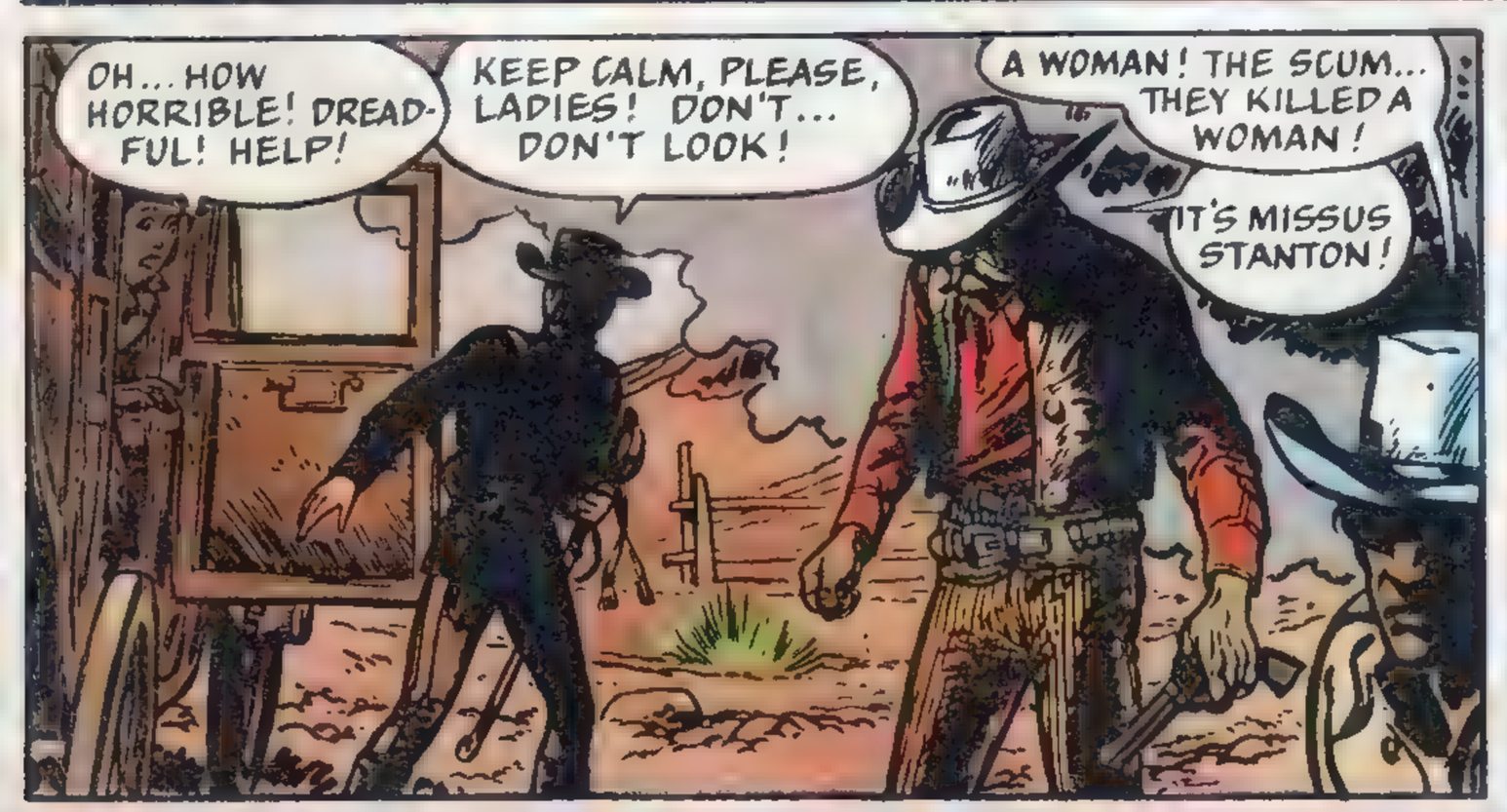

A FIRE! LOOKS LIKE IT'S JUST BURNING OUT!
HOLY MOSES! IT'S COMIN' FROM SAN JACINTO VALLEY... WHERE STANTON HAS HIS RANCH!
YOU'RE RIGHT, SON! THAT AIN'T NO ORDINARY FIRE!

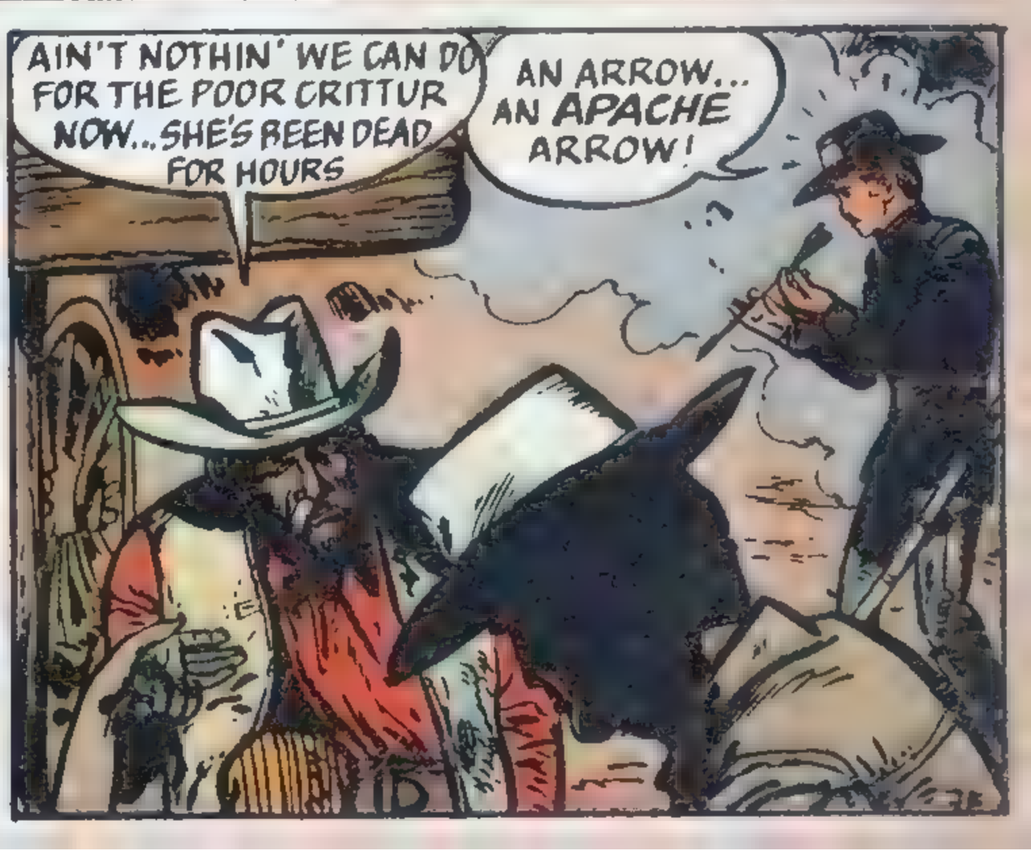
SOMETHING'S WRONG! WE GOT NO TIME TO LOSE!
GIDDAP THERE!

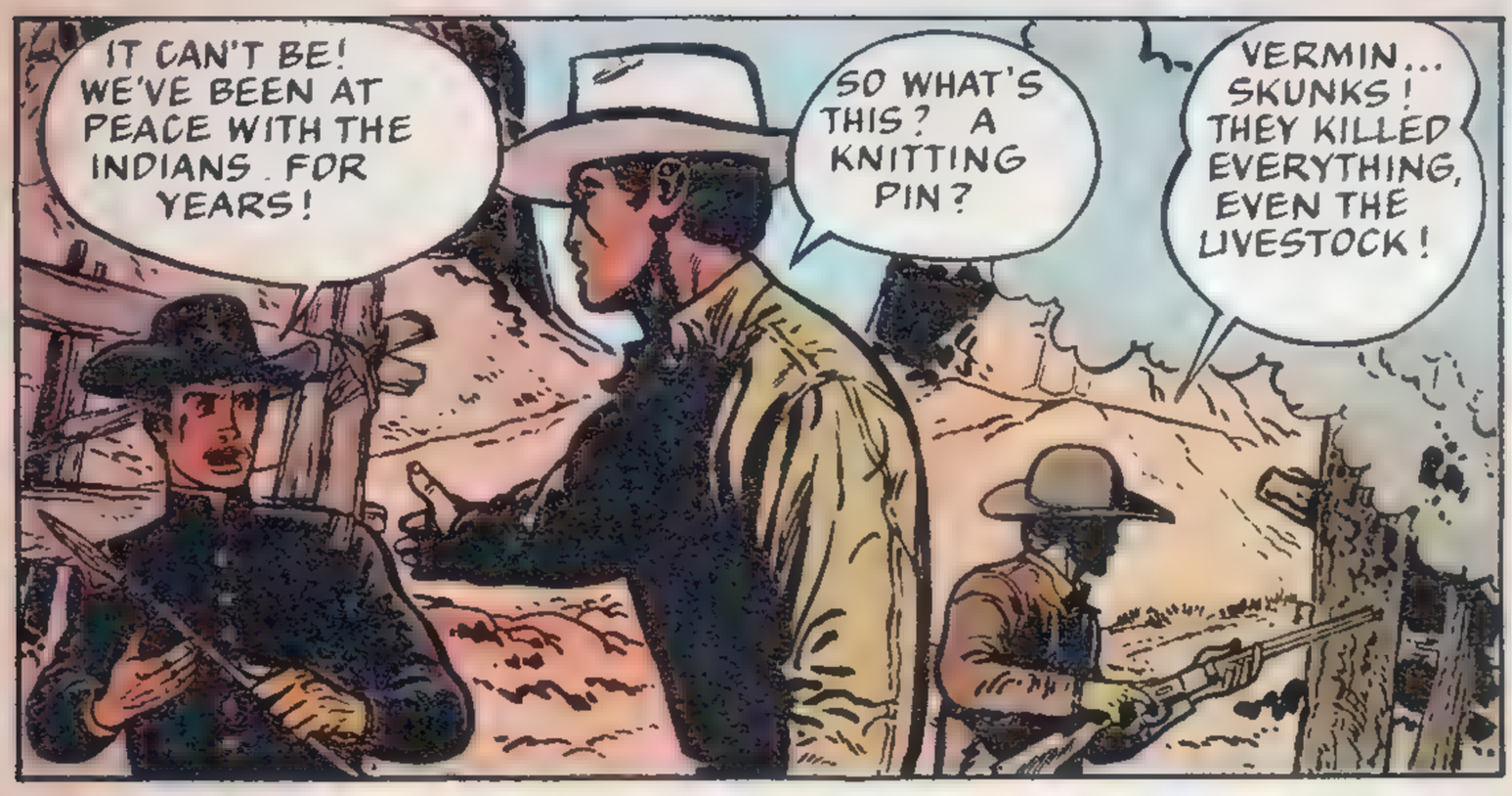

WHO IS THIS STANTON?
PIONEER... LOCAL MAN, BEEN HERE SIX YEARS ALONG WITH HIS WIFE AND KID, AND SOME MEXICAN PEONS...

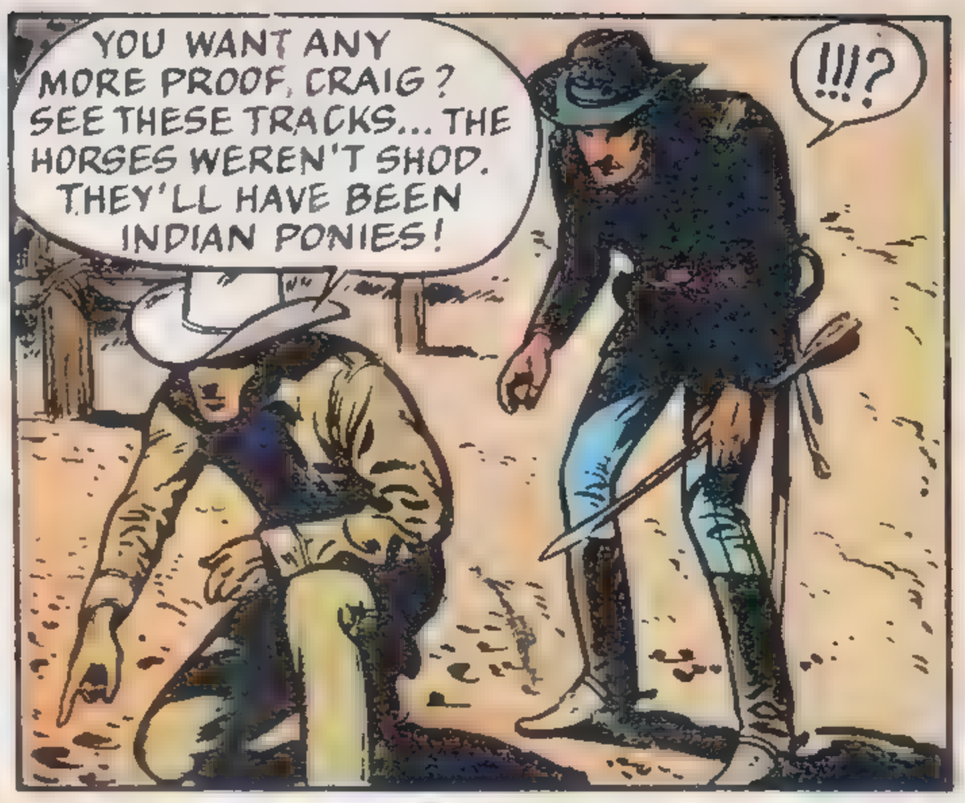

WHEW!
TARNATION...THAT'S THE END OF STANTON'S RANCH!
SAKES ALIVE, THAT DRIVER MUST BE CRAZY! WE'LL ALL BE SHAKEN TO BITS!

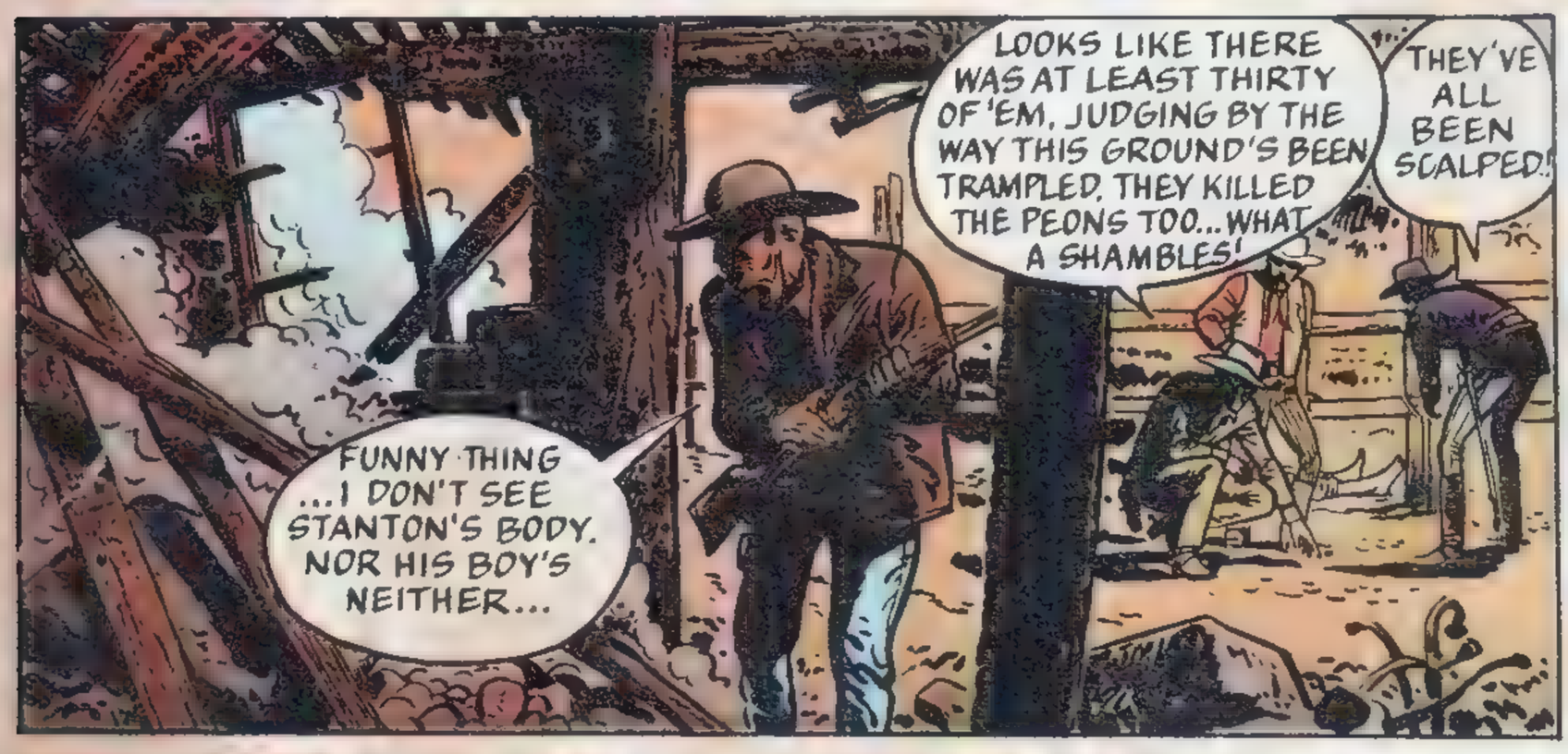

HELL...CORPSES! THEY WENT THROUGH THE PLACE FIRST!
GOL-DARN!
WH... WHAT'S GOING ON?


OH... HOW HORRIBLE! DREADFUL! HELP!
KEEP CALM, PLEASE, LADIES! DON'T... DON'T LOOK!
A WOMAN! THE SCUM... THEY KILLED A WOMAN!
IT'S MISSUS STANTON!


AIN'T NOTHIN' WE CAN DO FOR THE POOR CRITTUR NOW...SHE'S BEEN DEAD FOR HOURS
AN ARROW... AN APACHE ARROW!


IT CAN'T BE! WE'VE BEEN AT PEACE WITH THE INDIANS FOR YEARS!
SO WHAT'S THIS? A KNITTING PIN?
VERMIN... SKUNKS! THEY KILLED EVERYTHING, EVEN THE LIVESTOCK!


YOU WANT ANY MORE PROOF, CRAIG? SEE THESE TRACKS... THE HORSES WEREN'T SHOD. THEY'LL HAVE BEEN INDIAN PONIES!
!!!?

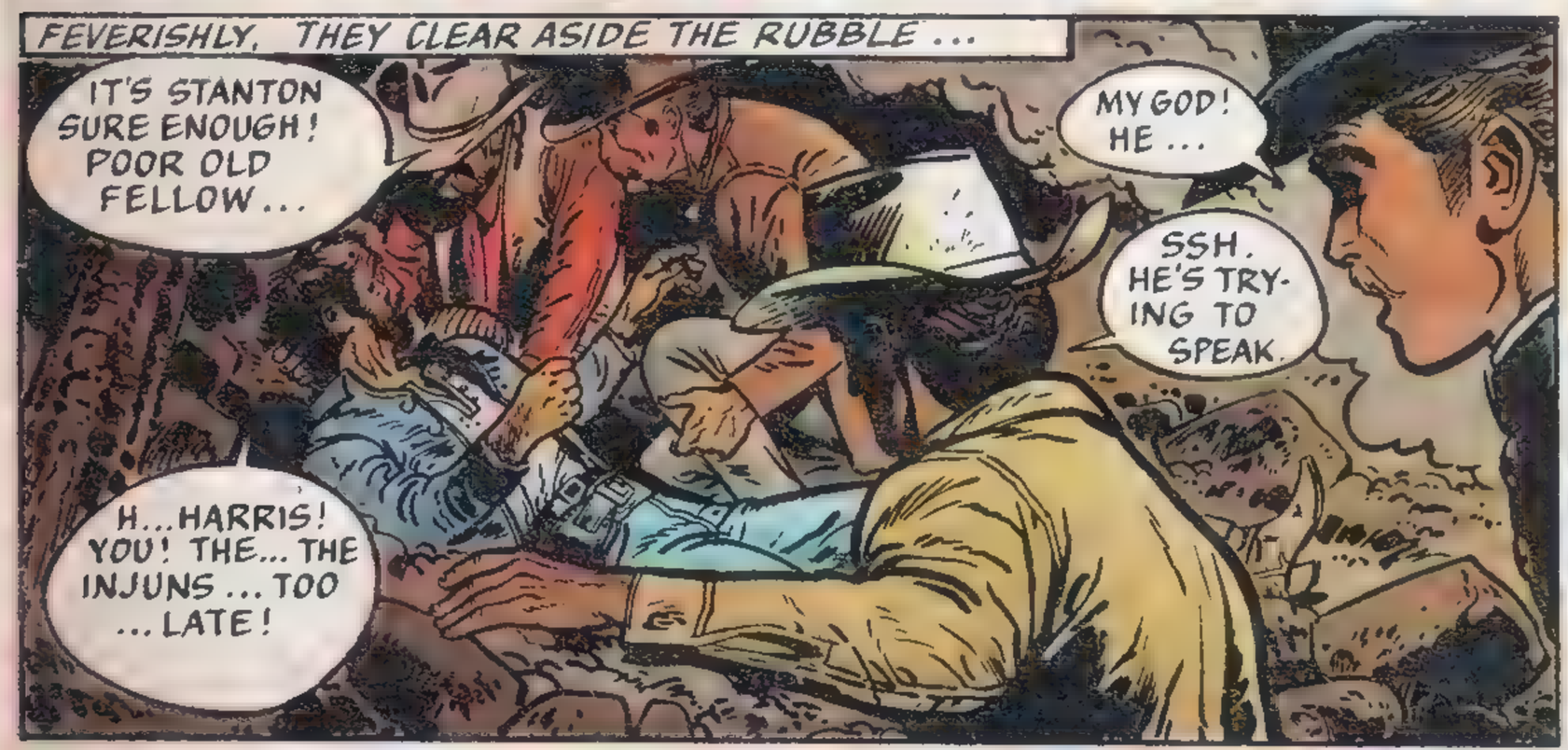

FUNNY THING ...I DON'T SEE STANTON'S BODY. NOR HIS BOY'S NEITHER...
LOOKS LIKE THERE WAS AT LEAST THIRTY OF 'EM, JUDGING BY THE WAY THIS GROUND'S BEEN TRAMPLED. THEY KILLED THE PEONS TOO...WHAT A SHAMBLES!
THEY'VE ALL BEEN SCALPED!

AND NONE OF 'EM FULLY DRESSED! THEY MUST'VE BEEN ATTACKED BY NIGHT. I ...
HEY, LISTEN!
8A

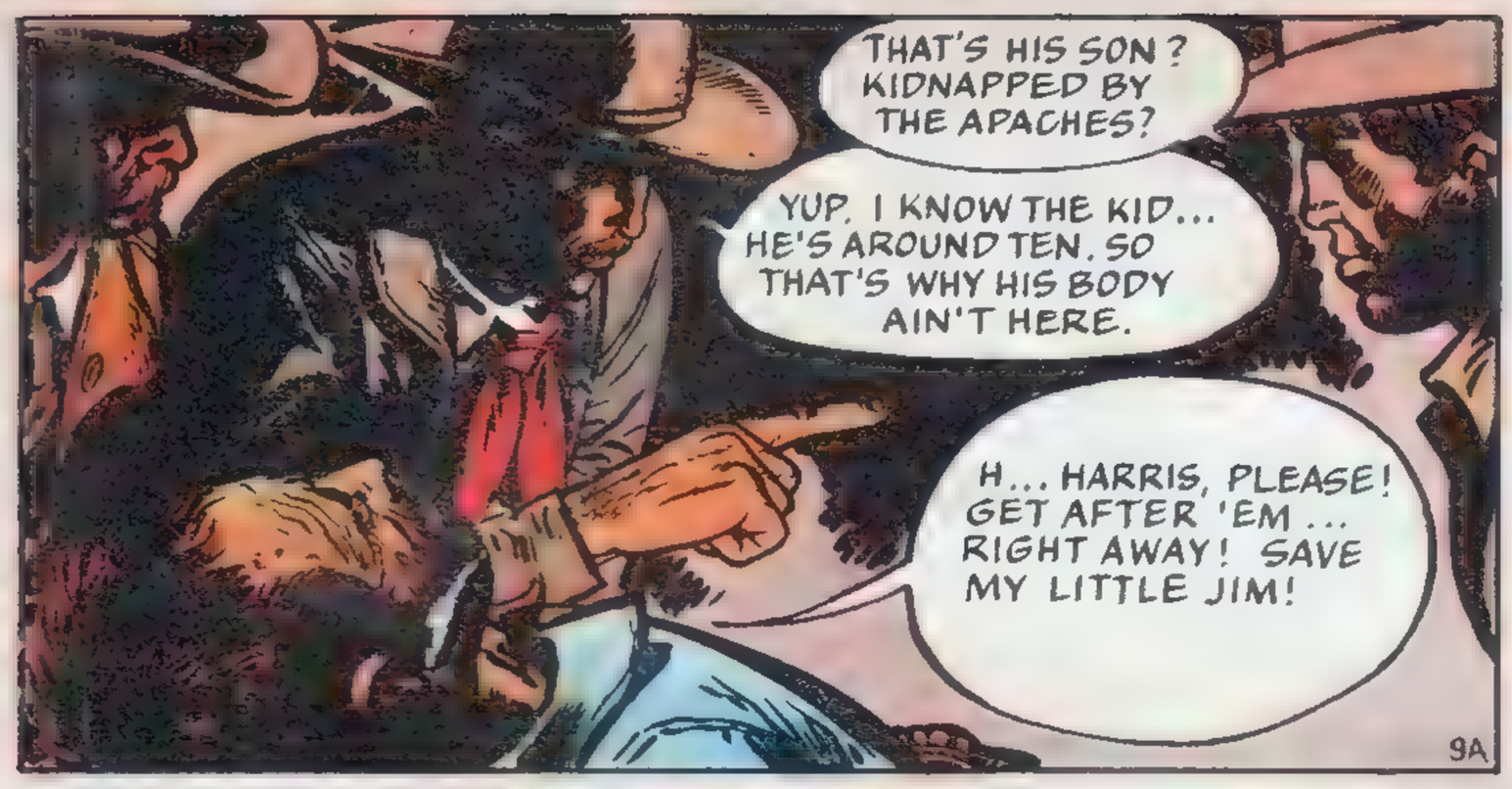
HEAR THAT?
SOUNDS LIKE GROANING...
OVER IN THEM RUINS!

THAT'S IT AGAIN! THERE'S A WOUNDED MAN IN THERE!!!
QUICK... LET'S GET HIM OUT!

LOOK... A FOOT!
IT'S STANTON! THE WALLS MUST'VE FALLEN IN ON HIM!

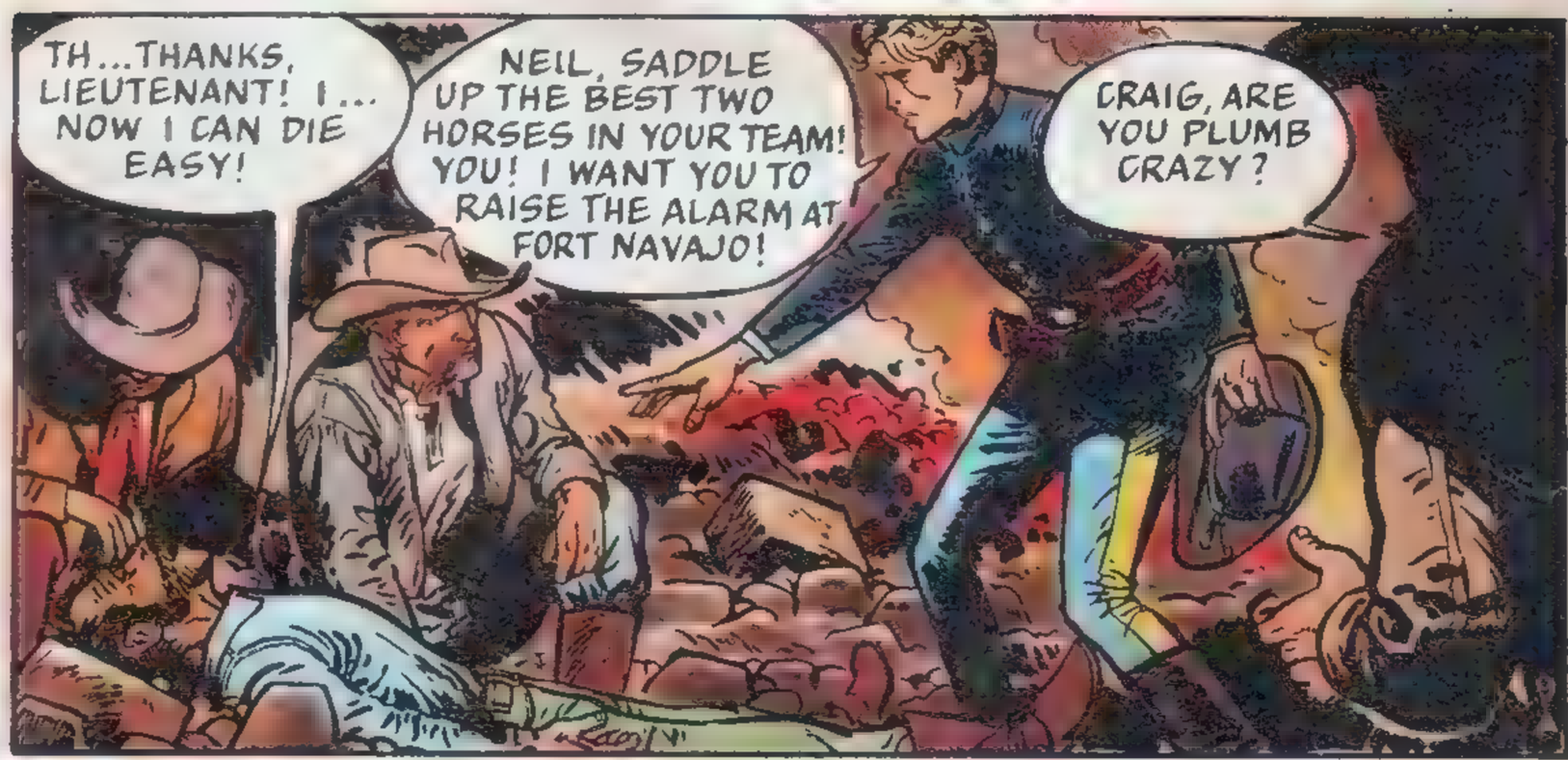

FEVERISHLY, THEY CLEAR ASIDE THE RUBBLE ...
IT'S STANTON SURE ENOUGH! POOR OLD FELLOW...
MY GOD! HE...
SSH. HE'S TRYING TO SPEAK.
H...HARRIS! YOU! THE... THE INJUNS ... TOO ... LATE!

H...HARRIS... HURRY! MY... MY KID! LITTLE JIM ... THEY... THEY TOOK HIM WITH 'EM!

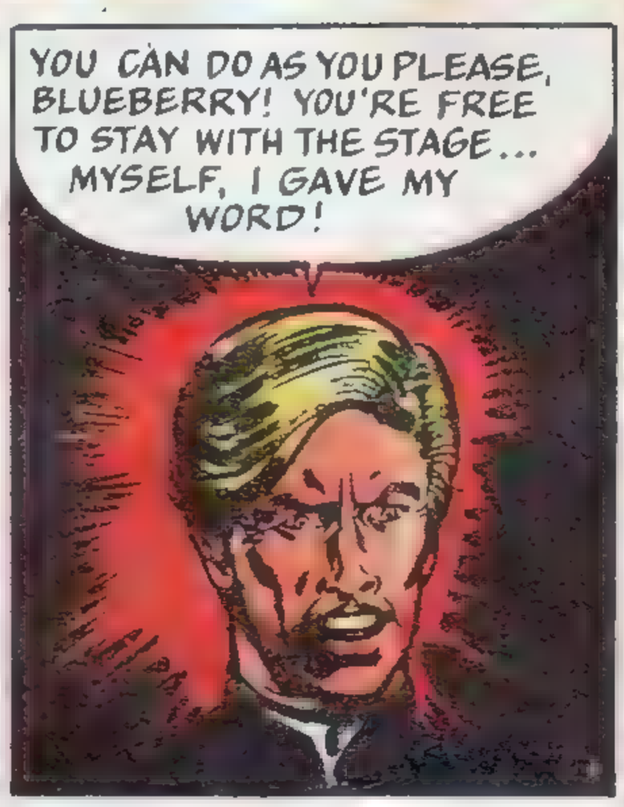

THAT'S HIS SON? KIDNAPPED BY THE APACHES?
YUP, I KNOW THE KID... HE'S AROUND TEN, SO THAT'S WHY HIS BODY AIN'T HERE.
H... HARRIS, PLEASE! GET AFTER 'EM... RIGHT AWAY! SAVE MY LITTLE JIM!
9A

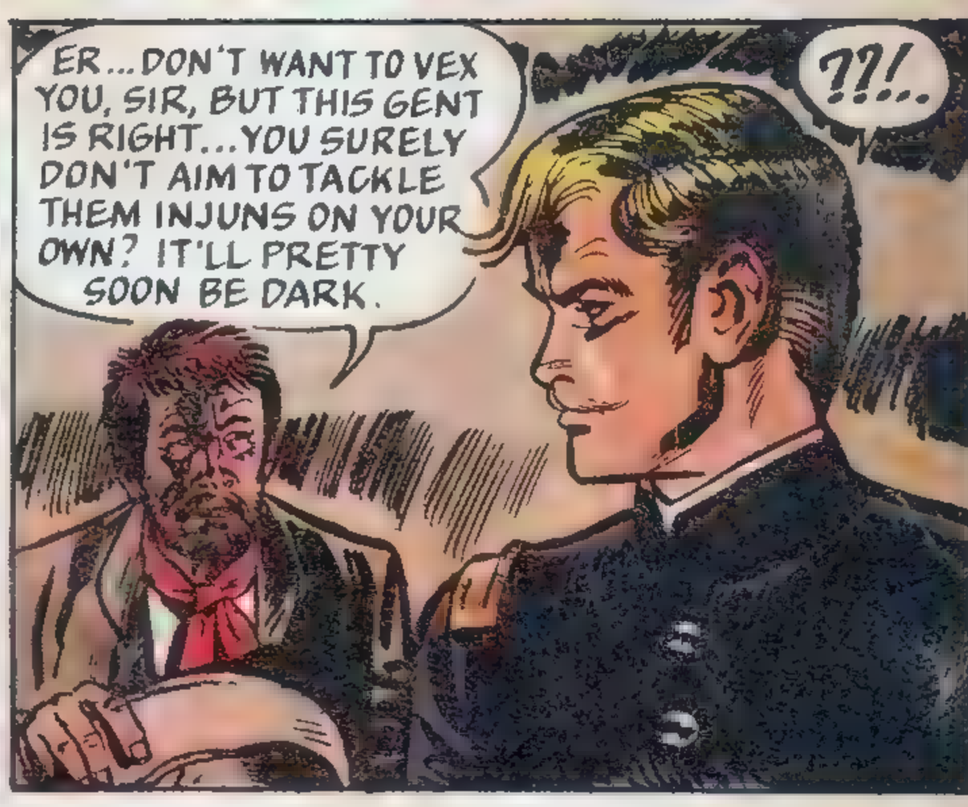
TAKE IT EASY, STANTON! WE'LL DO ALL WE CAN!
AN... AN OFFICER! LIEUTENANT, SWEAR... SWEAR YOU'LL RESCUE MY SON!

I GIVE YOU MY WORD, STANTON! WE'LL GET ON THE KIDNAPPERS' TRAIL RIGHT AWAY!
WE'LL DO WHAT?

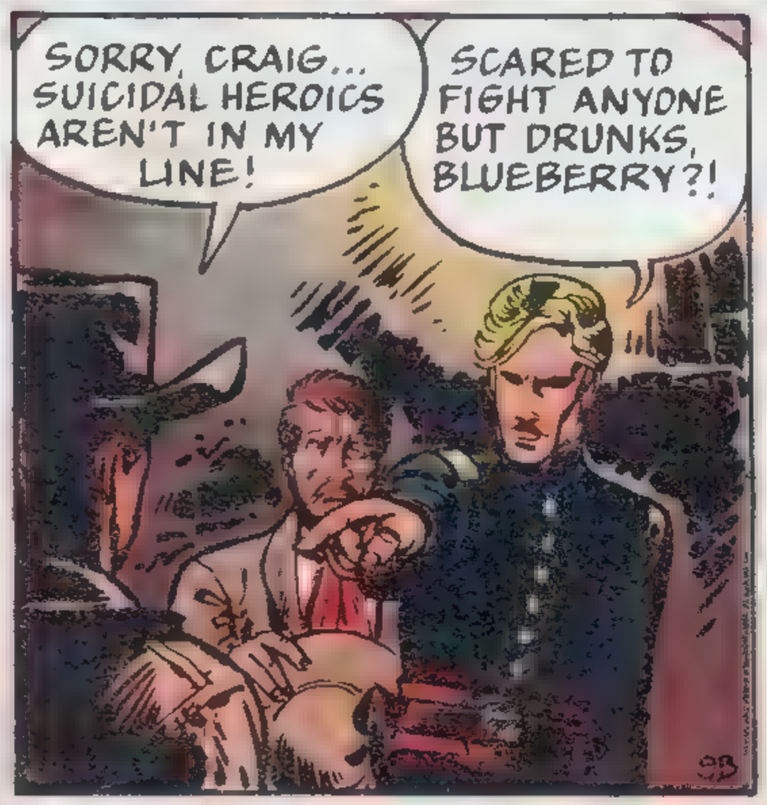

TH...THANKS, LIEUTENANT! I... NOW I CAN DIE EASY!
NEIL, SADDLE UP THE BEST TWO HORSES IN YOUR TEAM! YOU! I WANT YOU TO RAISE THE ALARM AT FORT NAVAJO!
CRAIG, ARE YOU PLUMB CRAZY?

YOU OBJECT, BLUEBERRY?
YEAH, YOU'RE CRAZY SURE ENOUGH! ALL YOU'LL GET IS AN ARROW IN THE BACK, CRAIG!

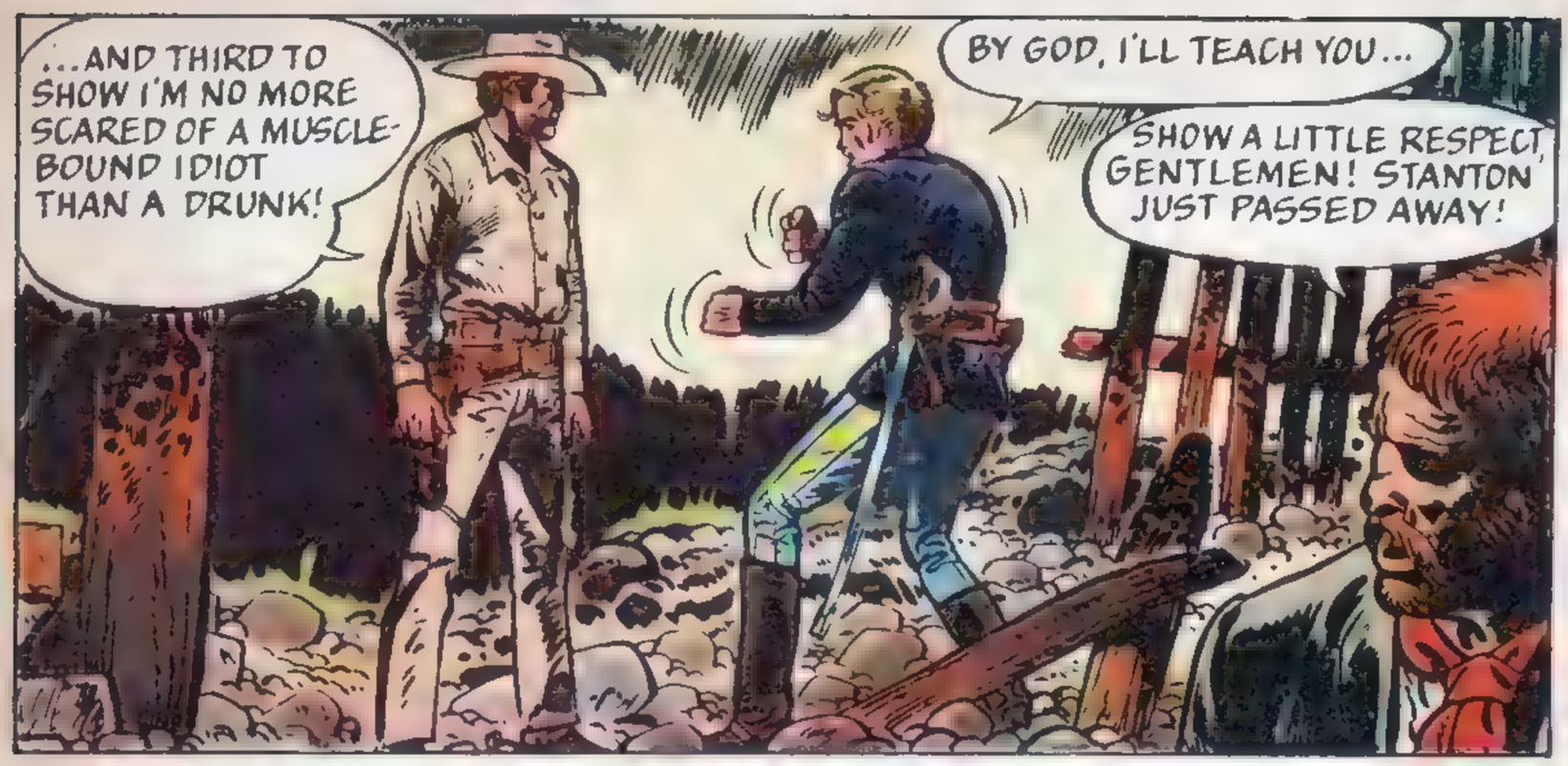

YOU CAN DO AS YOU PLEASE, BLUEBERRY! YOU'RE FREE TO STAY WITH THE STAGE... MYSELF, I GAVE MY WORD!


ER...DON'T WANT TO VEX YOU, SIR, BUT THIS GENT IS RIGHT...YOU SURELY DON'T AIM TO TACKLE THEM INJUNS ON YOUR OWN? IT'LL PRETTY SOON BE DARK.
??!..

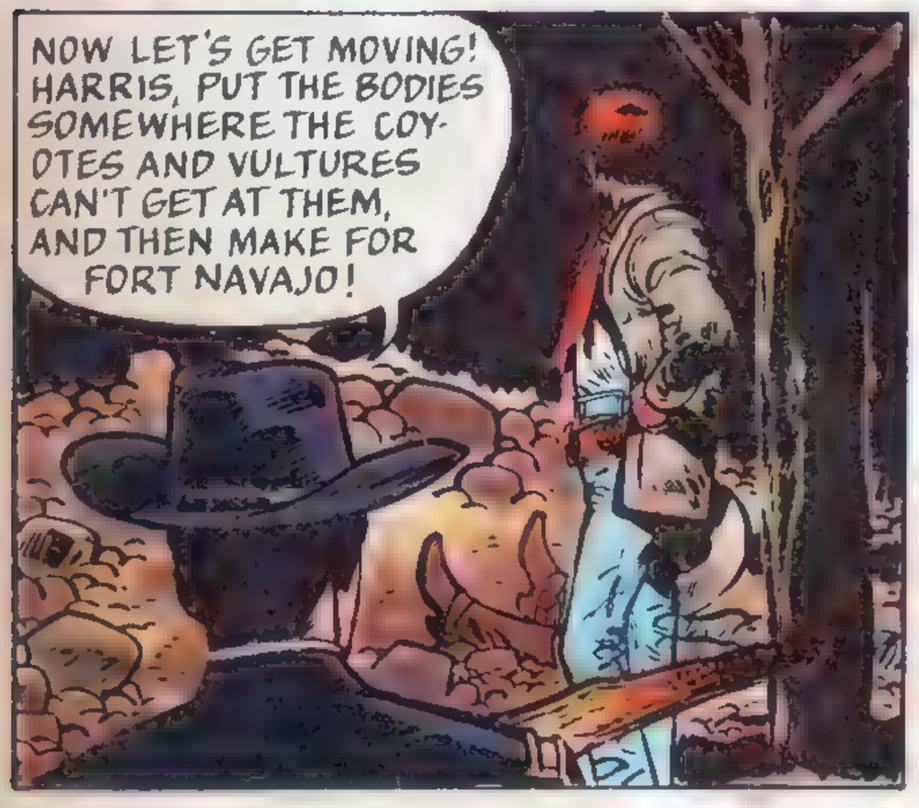
MAYBE I CAN SURPRISE 'EM...ANYWAY, I CAN GET ON THEIR TRAIL AND GUIDE THE MEN SENT FROM FORT NAVAJO. THE DARK WILL GIVE ME COVER!

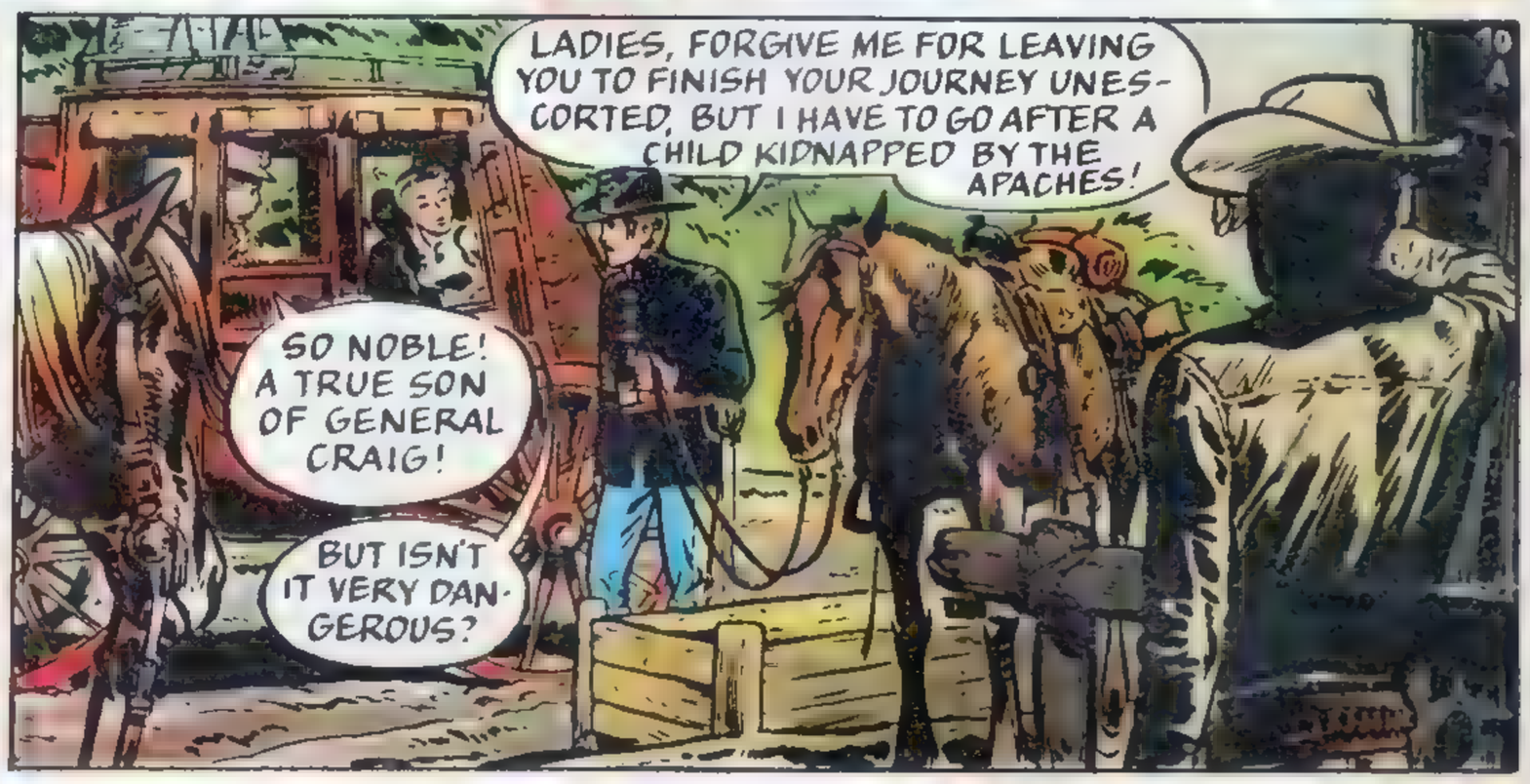

SORRY, CRAIG... SUICIDAL HEROICS AREN'T IN MY LINE!
SCARED TO FIGHT ANYONE BUT DRUNKS, BLUEBERRY?!

I GUESS I REALLY WILL HAVE TO KNOCK YOU DOWN, CRAIG! FIRST, TO STOP YOU ACTING THE FOOL, SECOND YOU'RE RILING ME SOME...

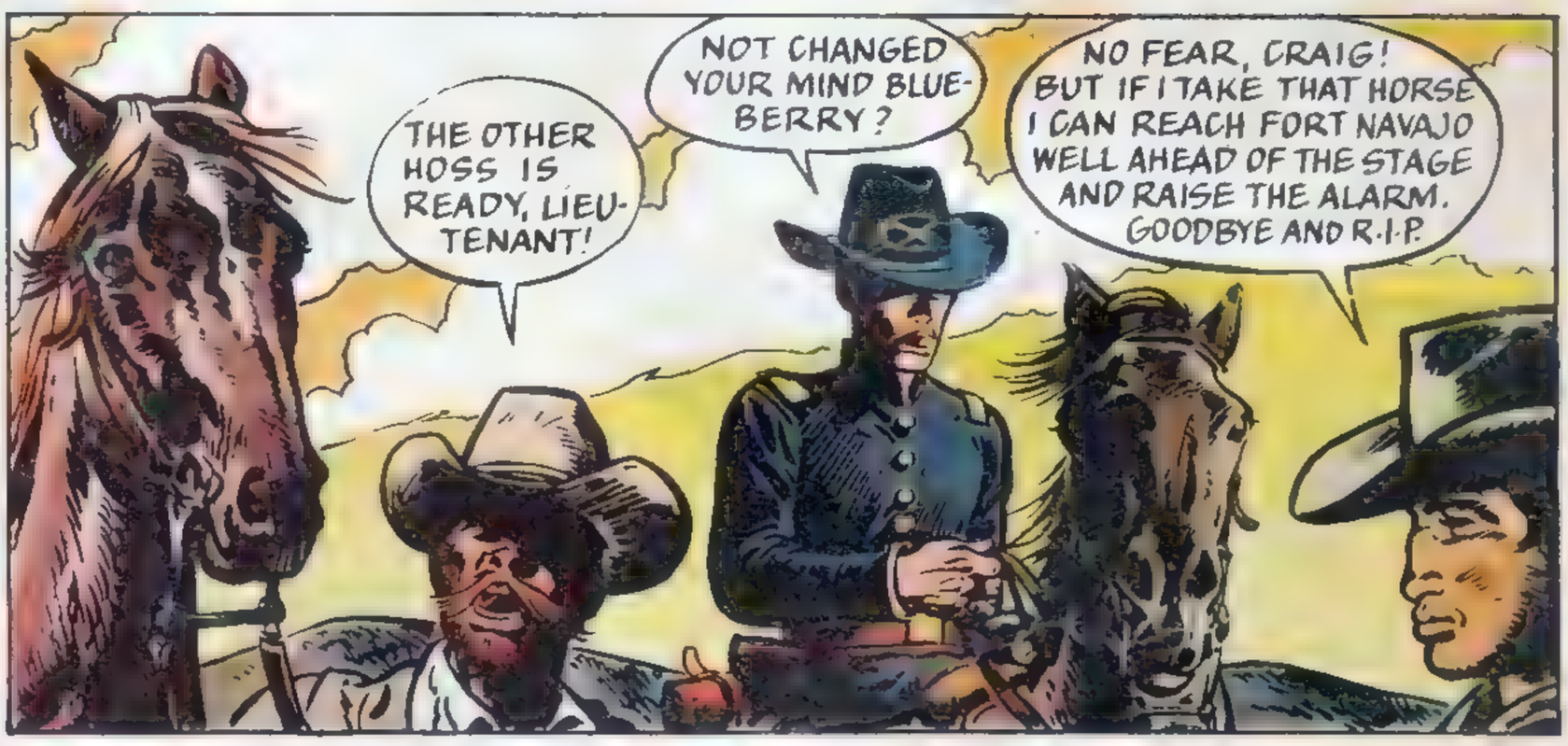

...AND THIRD TO SHOW I'M NO MORE SCARED OF A MUSCLE-BOUND IDIOT THAN A DRUNK!
BY GOD, I'LL TEACH YOU...
SHOW A LITTLE RESPECT, GENTLEMEN! STANTON JUST PASSED AWAY!

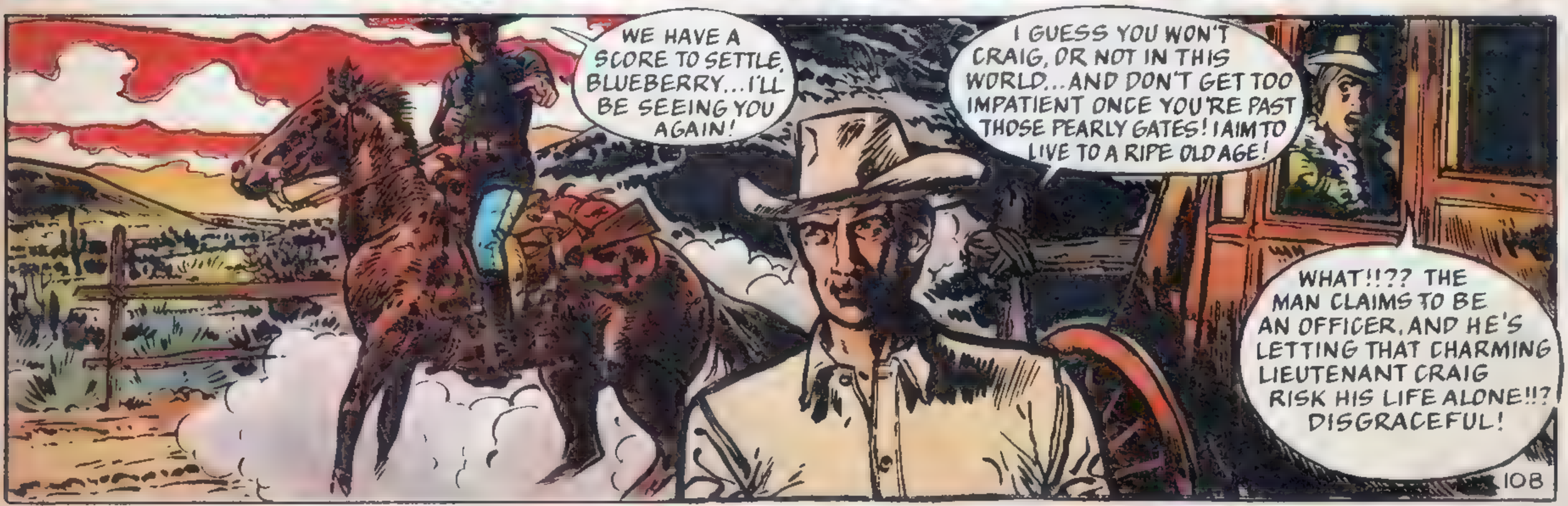
I'M SORRY, HARRIS. POOR OLD FELLOW!
GOD REST HIM, AND ALL THESE POOR SOULS!


NOW LET'S GET MOVING! HARRIS, PUT THE BODIES SOMEWHERE THE COYOTES AND VULTURES CAN'T GET AT THEM, AND THEN MAKE FOR FORT NAVAJO!

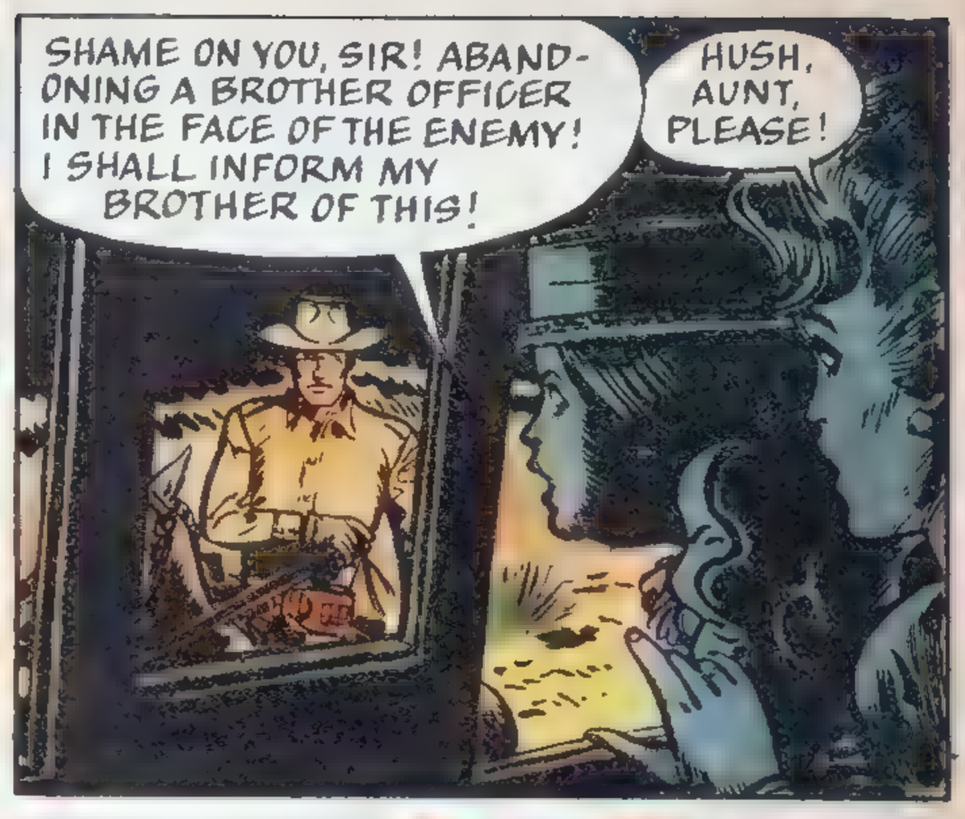

LADIES, FORGIVE ME FOR LEAVING YOU TO FINISH YOUR JOURNEY UNESCORTED, BUT I HAVE TO GO AFTER A CHILD KIDNAPPED BY THE APACHES!
SO NOBLE! A TRUE SON OF GENERAL CRAIG!
BUT ISN'T IT VERY DANGEROUS?

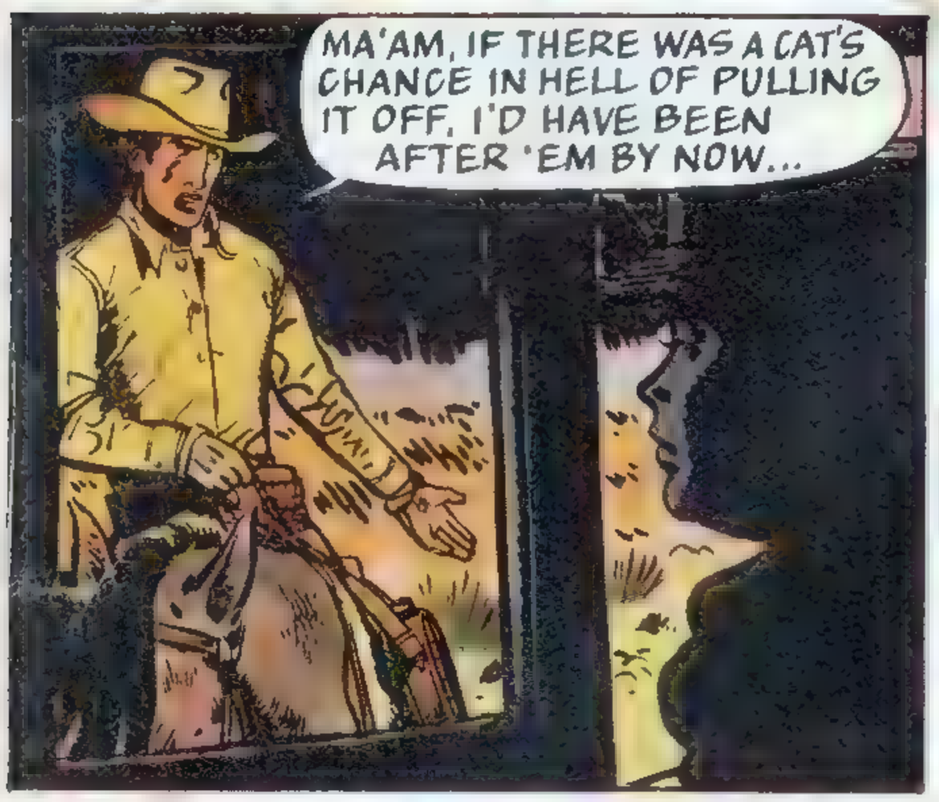
I'M GRATEFUL FOR YOUR CONCERN, MISS MURIEL... WHEN YOU ARRIVE, ASK YOUR FATHER TO SEND A PATROL! I'LL MARK MY TRAIL...
GOOD LUCK, LIEUTENANT!

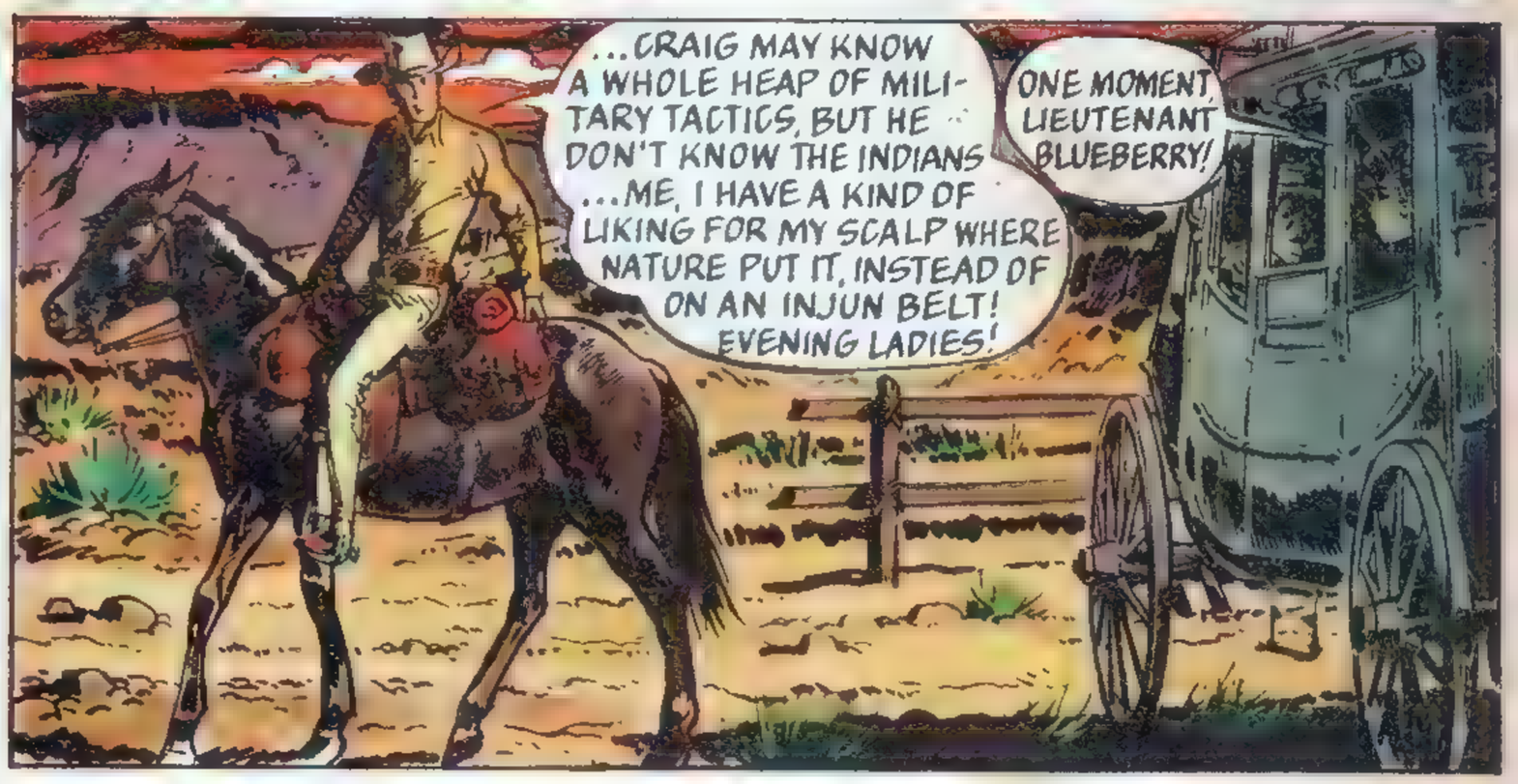

THE OTHER HOSS IS READY, LIEUTENANT!
NOT CHANGED YOUR MIND BLUEBERRY?
NO FEAR, CRAIG! BUT IF I TAKE THAT HORSE I CAN REACH FORT NAVAJO WELL AHEAD OF THE STAGE AND RAISE THE ALARM. GOODBYE AND R.I.P.

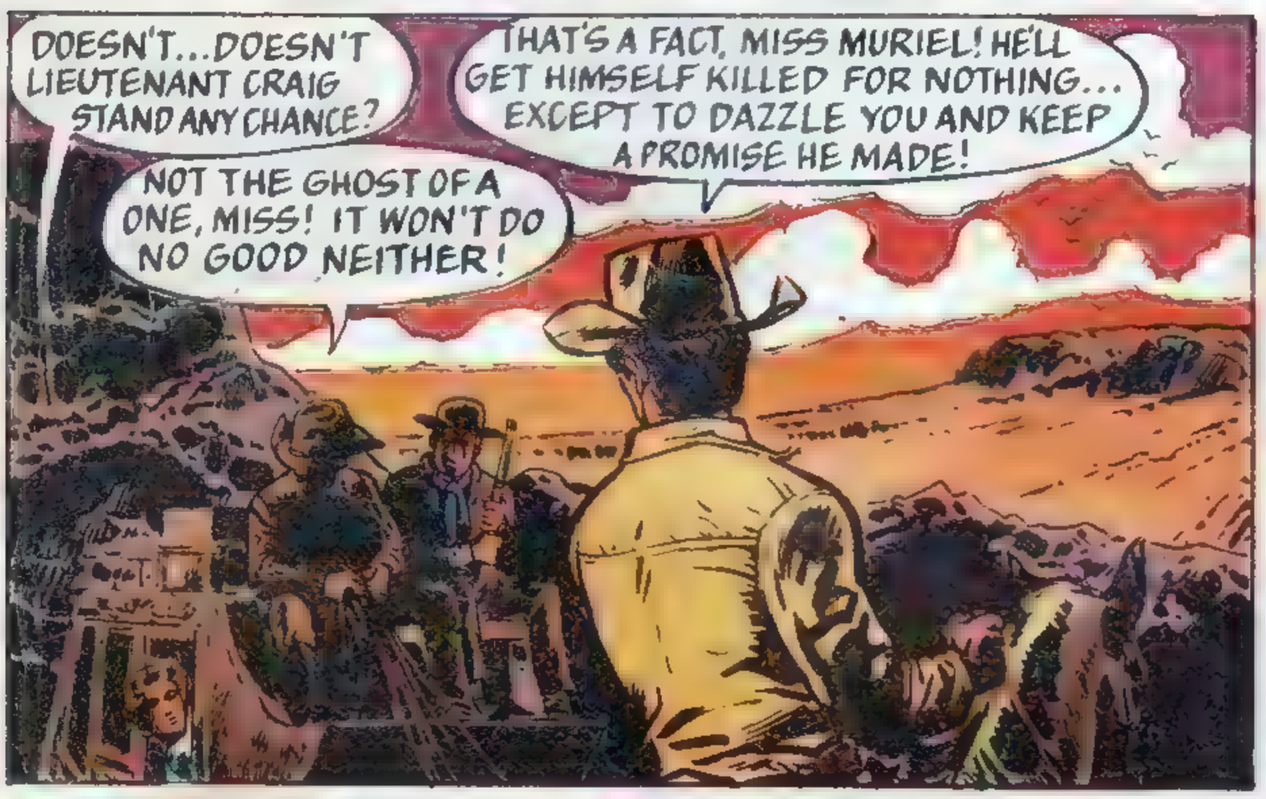

WE HAVE A SCORE TO SETTLE, BLUEBERRY...I'LL BE SEEING YOU AGAIN!
I GUESS YOU WON'T CRAIG, OR NOT IN THIS WORLD...AND DON'T GET TOO IMPATIENT ONCE YOU'RE PAST THOSE PEARLY GATES! I AIM TO LIVE TO A RIPE OLD AGE!
WHAT!!?? THE MAN CLAIMS TO BE AN OFFICER, AND HE'S LETTING THAT CHARMING LIEUTENANT CRAIG RISK HIS LIFE ALONE!!? DISGRACEFUL!

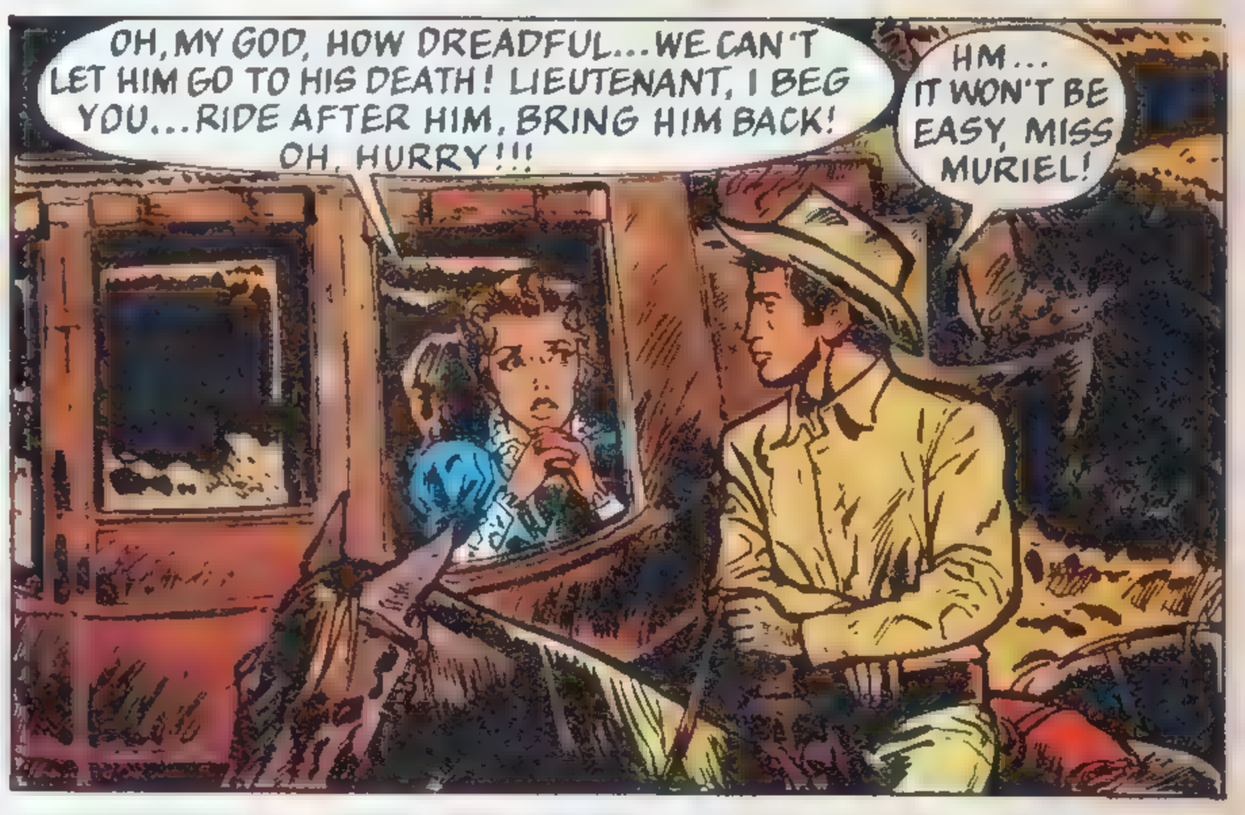
GIDDUP!
HEAVEN PROTECT LIEUTENANT CRAIG!

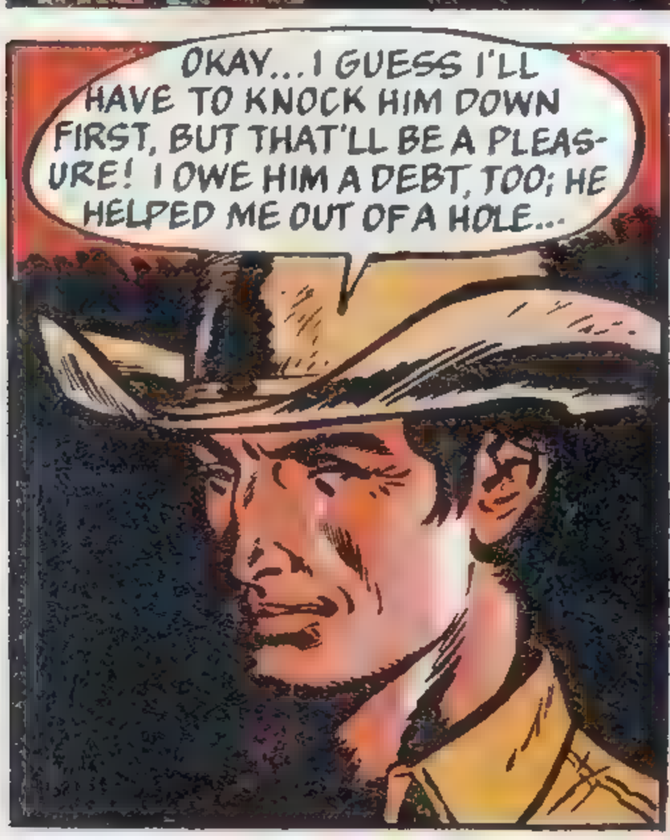

SHAME ON YOU, SIR! ABANDONING A BROTHER OFFICER IN THE FACE OF THE ENEMY! I SHALL INFORM MY BROTHER OF THIS!
HUSH, AUNT, PLEASE!

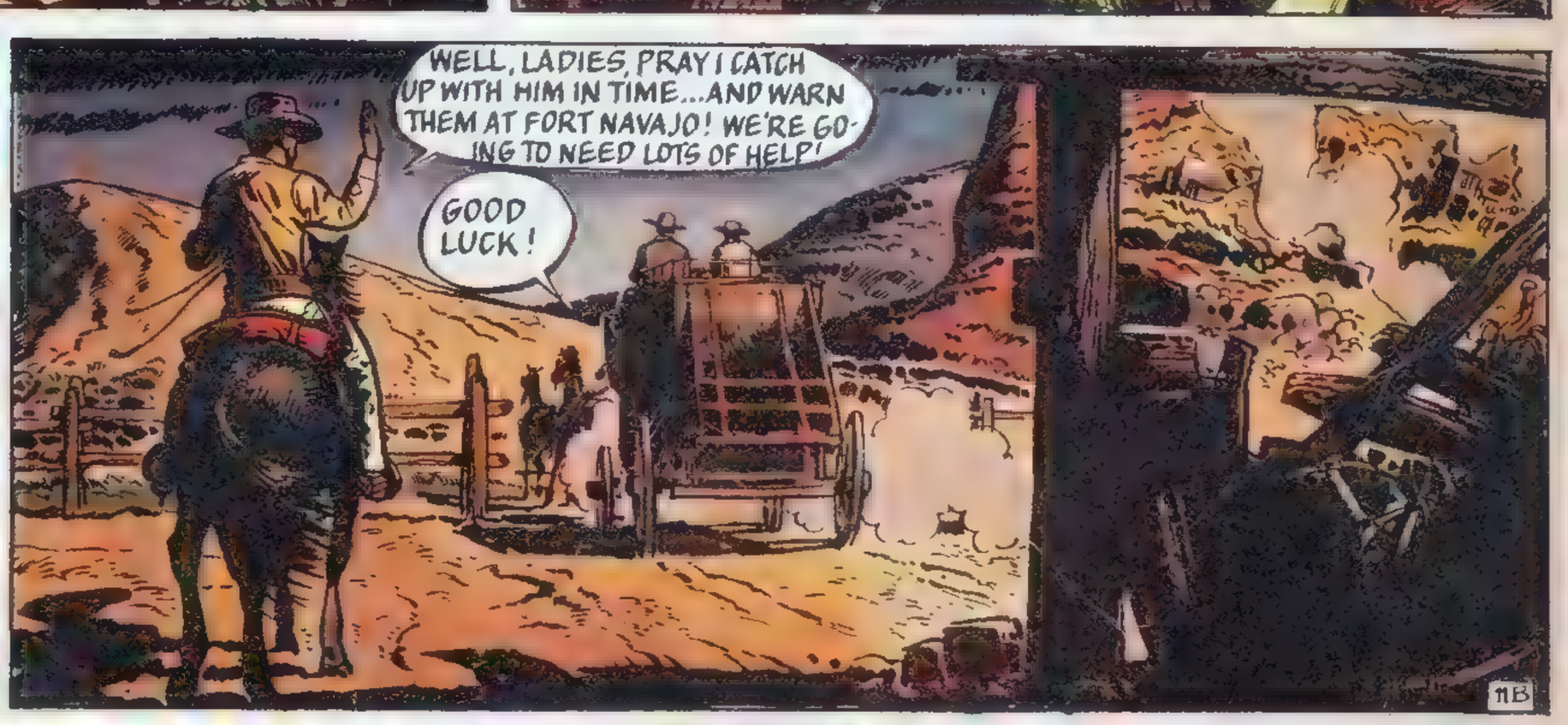

MA'AM, IF THERE WAS A CAT'S CHANCE IN HELL OF PULLING IT OFF, I'D HAVE BEEN AFTER 'EM BY NOW...

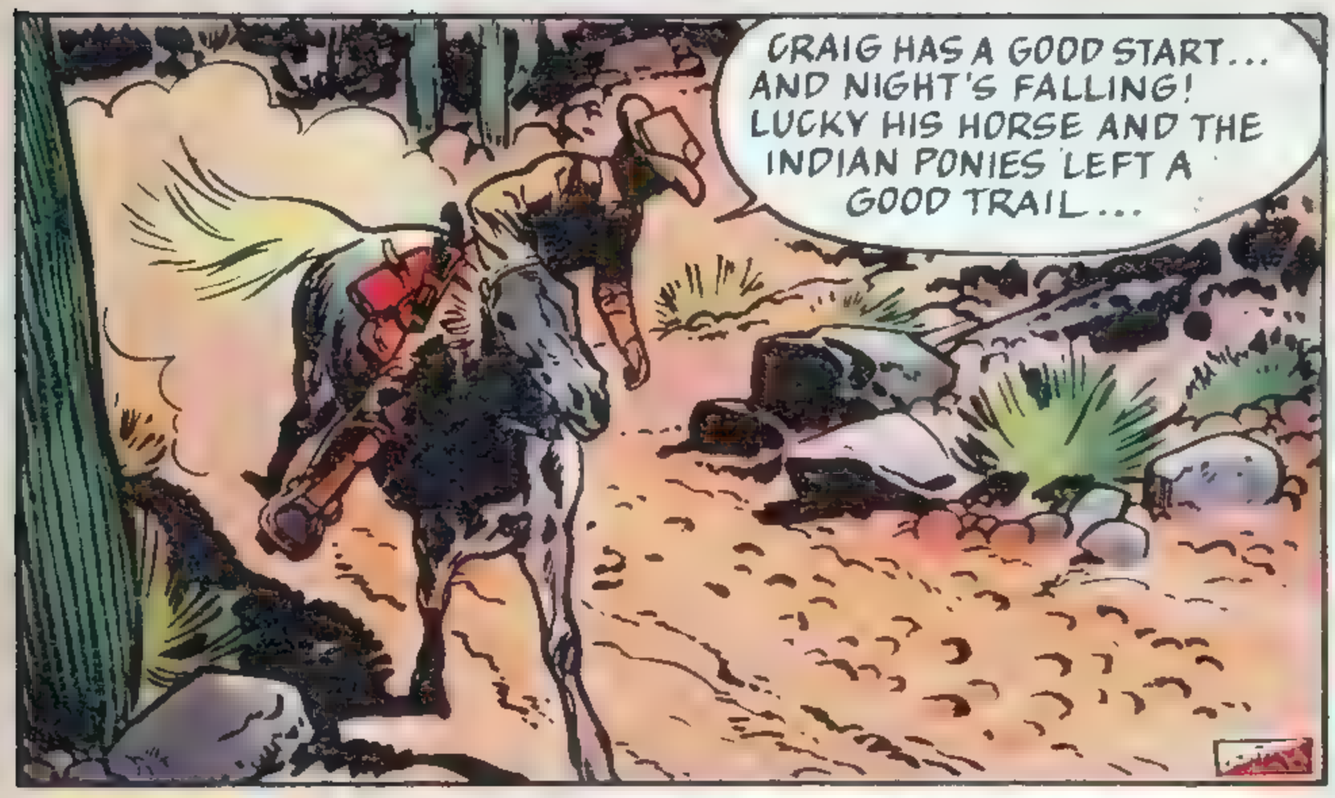

...CRAIG MAY KNOW A WHOLE HEAP OF MILITARY TACTICS, BUT HE DON'T KNOW THE INDIANS ...ME, I HAVE A KIND OF LIKING FOR MY SCALP WHERE NATURE PUT IT, INSTEAD OF ON AN INJUN BELT! EVENING LADIES!
ONE MOMENT, LIEUTENANT BLUEBERRY!


DOESN'T...DOESN'T LIEUTENANT CRAIG STAND ANY CHANCE?
THAT'S A FACT, MISS MURIEL! HE'LL GET HIMSELF KILLED FOR NOTHING... EXCEPT TO DAZZLE YOU AND KEEP A PROMISE HE MADE!
NOT THE GHOST OF A ONE, MISS! IT WON'T DO NO GOOD NEITHER!

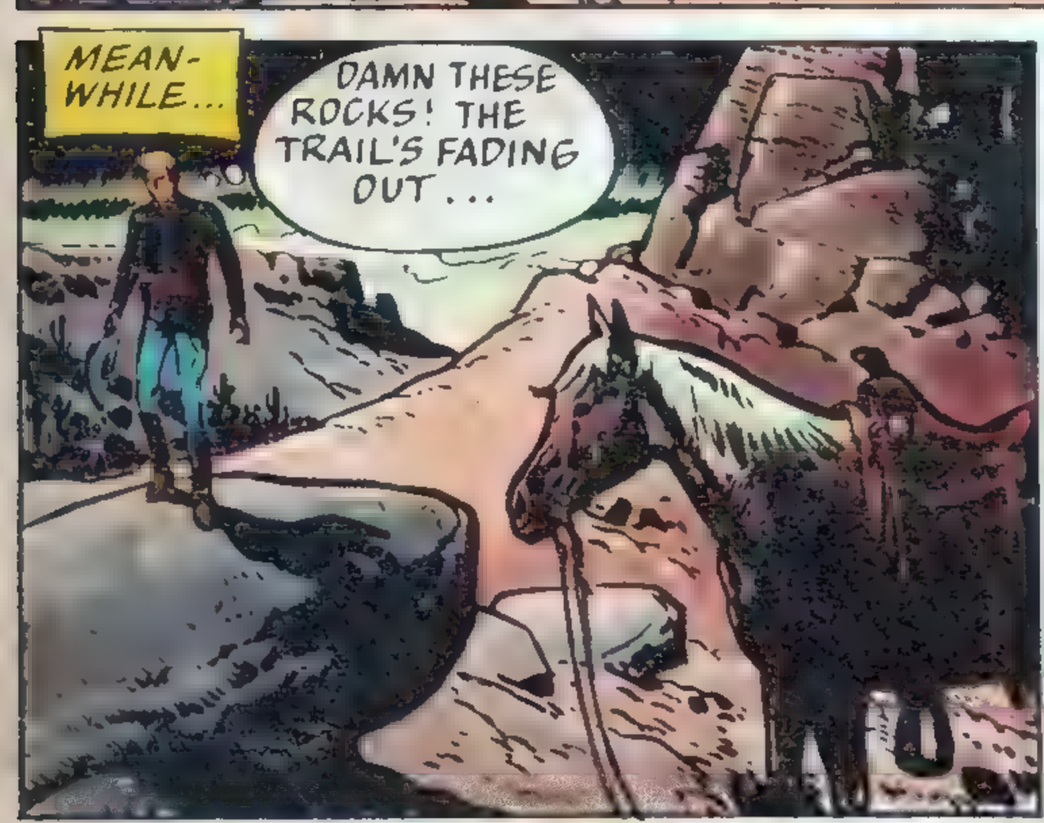

OH, MY GOD, HOW DREADFUL...WE CAN'T LET HIM GO TO HIS DEATH! LIEUTENANT, I BEG YOU...RIDE AFTER HIM, BRING HIM BACK! OH, HURRY!!!
HM... IT WON'T BE EASY, MISS MURIEL!

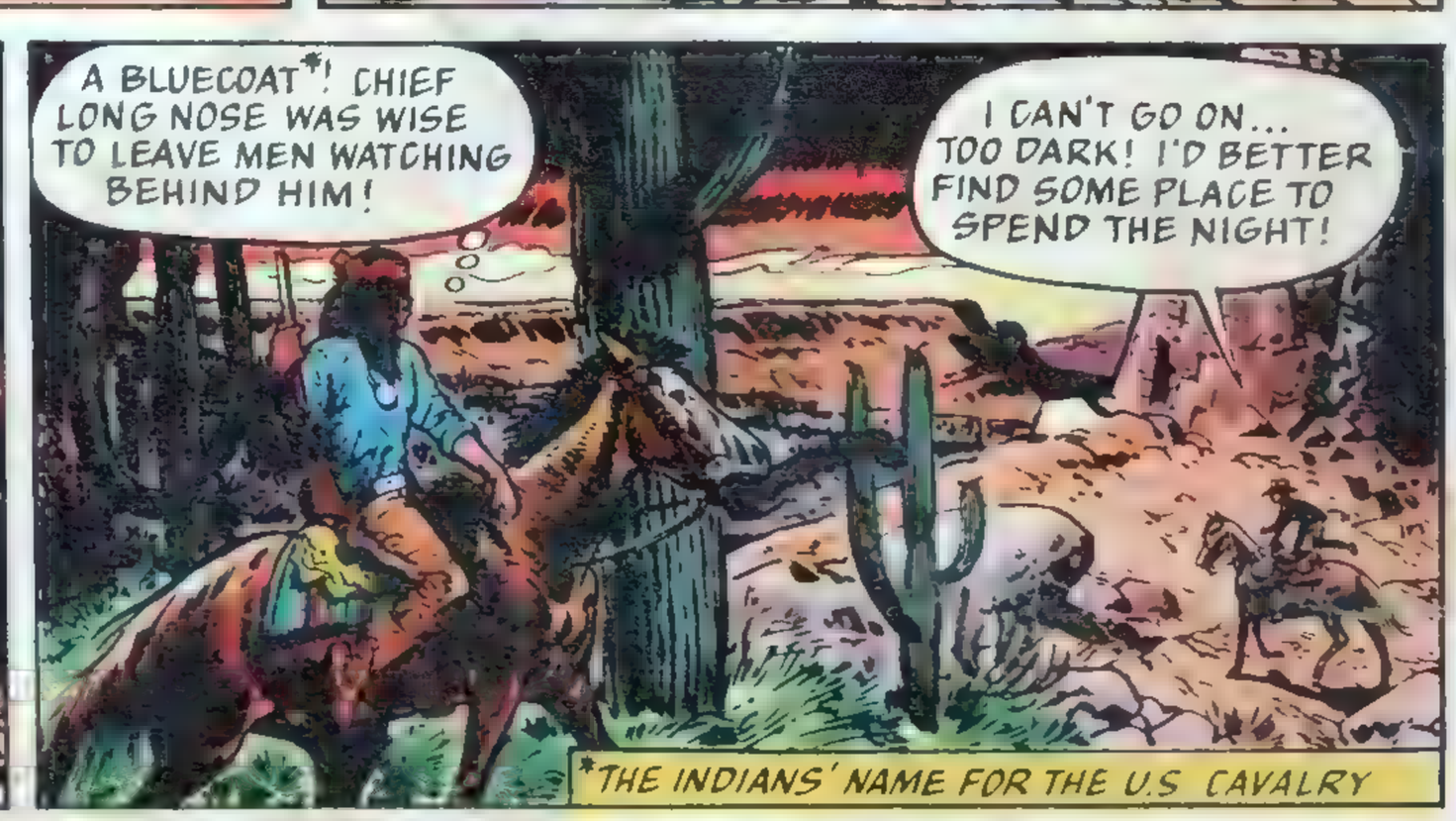

OKAY...I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO KNOCK HIM DOWN FIRST, BUT THAT'LL BE A PLEASURE! I OWE HIM A DEBT, TOO; HE HELPED ME OUT OF A HOLE...


WELL, LADIES, PRAY I CATCH UP WITH HIM IN TIME...AND WARN THEM AT FORT NAVAJO! WE'RE GOING TO NEED LOTS OF HELP!
GOOD LUCK!


CRAIG HAS A GOOD START... AND NIGHT'S FALLING! LUCKY HIS HORSE AND THE INDIAN PONIES LEFT A GOOD TRAIL...

WELL, IF THAT IDIOT HASN'T GONE OFF TO THE MOUNTAINS! AT DUSK TOO! HE'S EVEN CRAZIER THAN I THOUGHT!

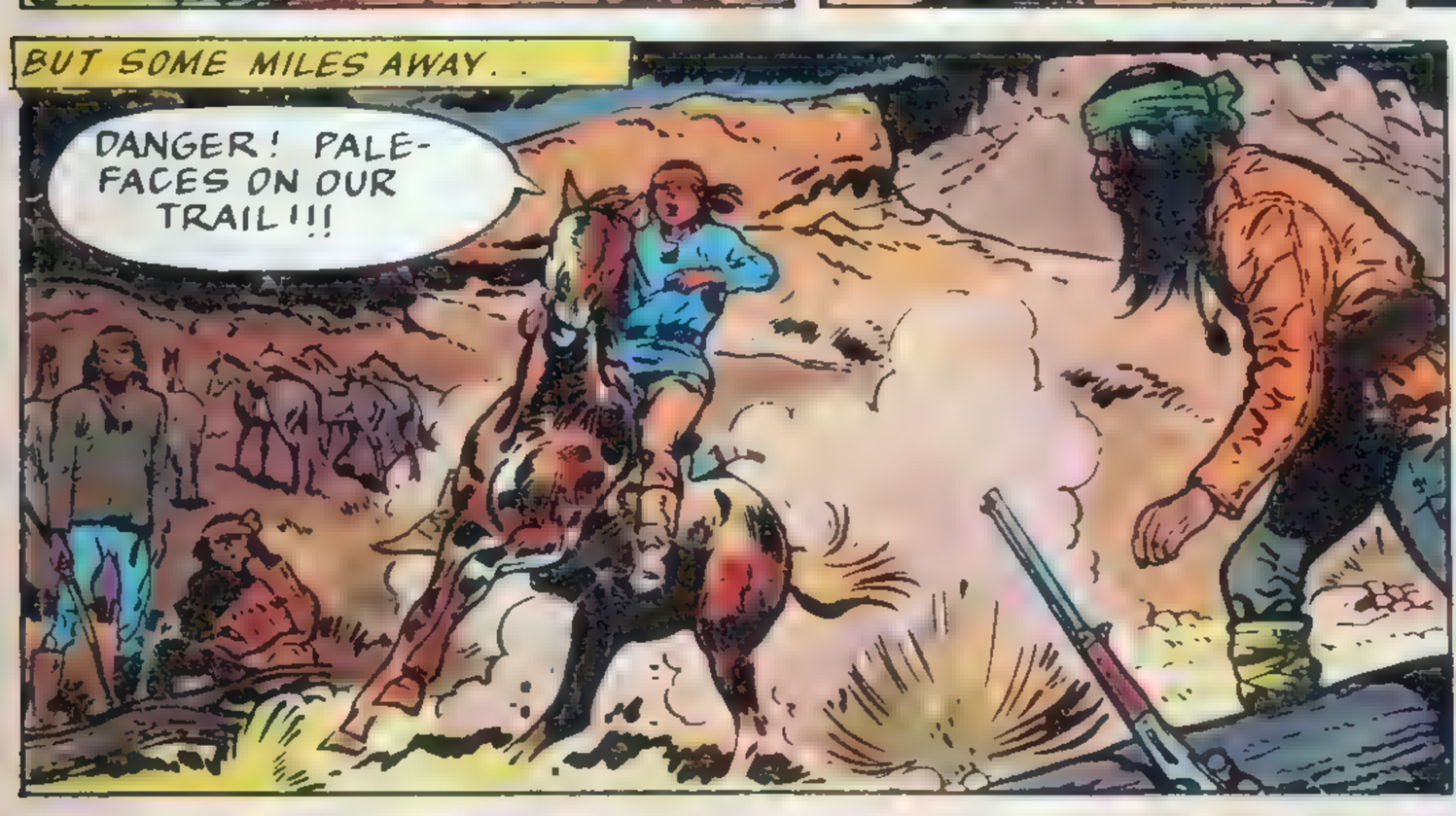

MEAN-WHILE...
DAMN THESE ROCKS! THE TRAIL'S FADING OUT...


A BLUECOAT*! CHIEF LONG NOSE WAS WISE TO LEAVE MEN WATCHING BEHIND HIM!
I CAN'T GO ON... TOO DARK! I'D BETTER FIND SOME PLACE TO SPEND THE NIGHT!
*THE INDIANS' NAME FOR THE U.S CAVALRY

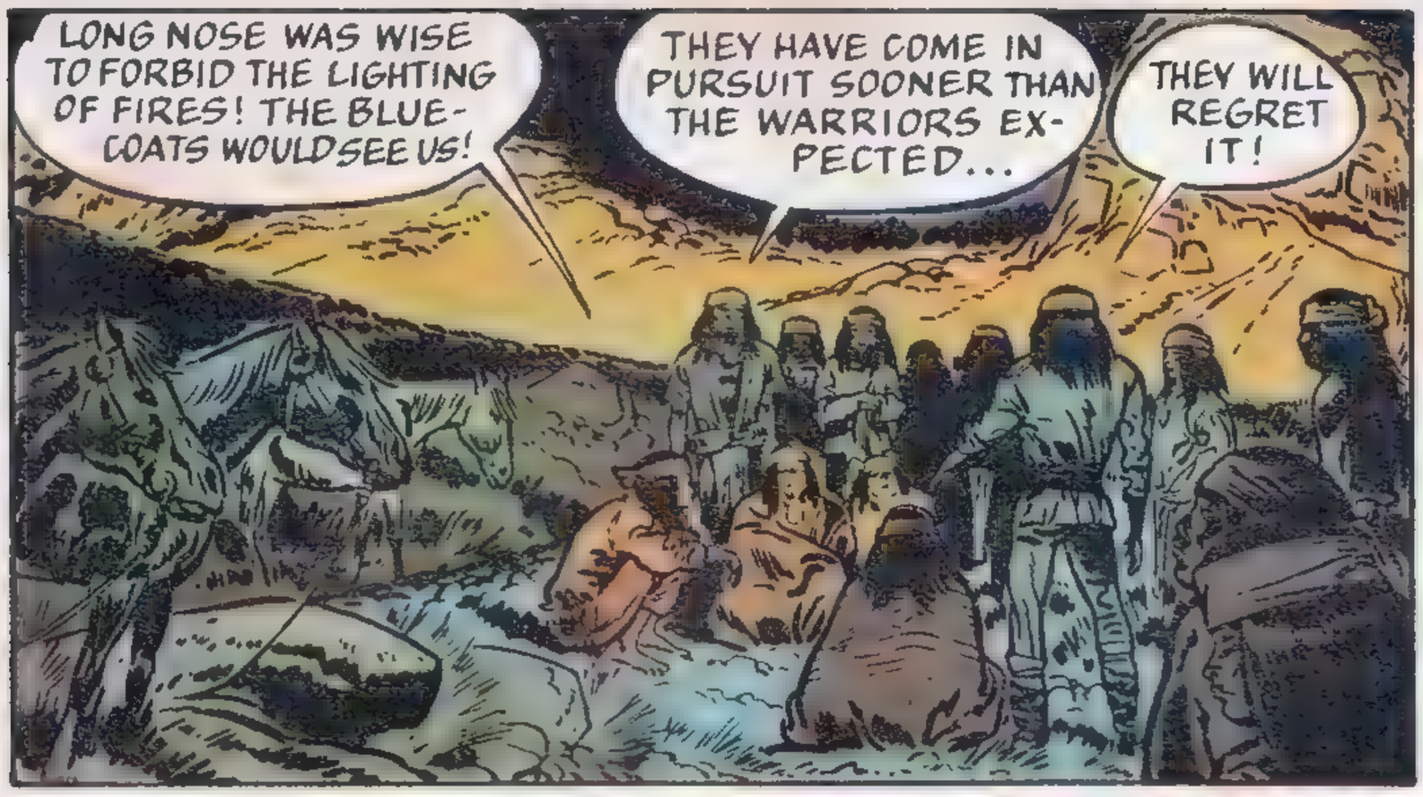
QUICK... I MUST WARN MY BROTHERS!

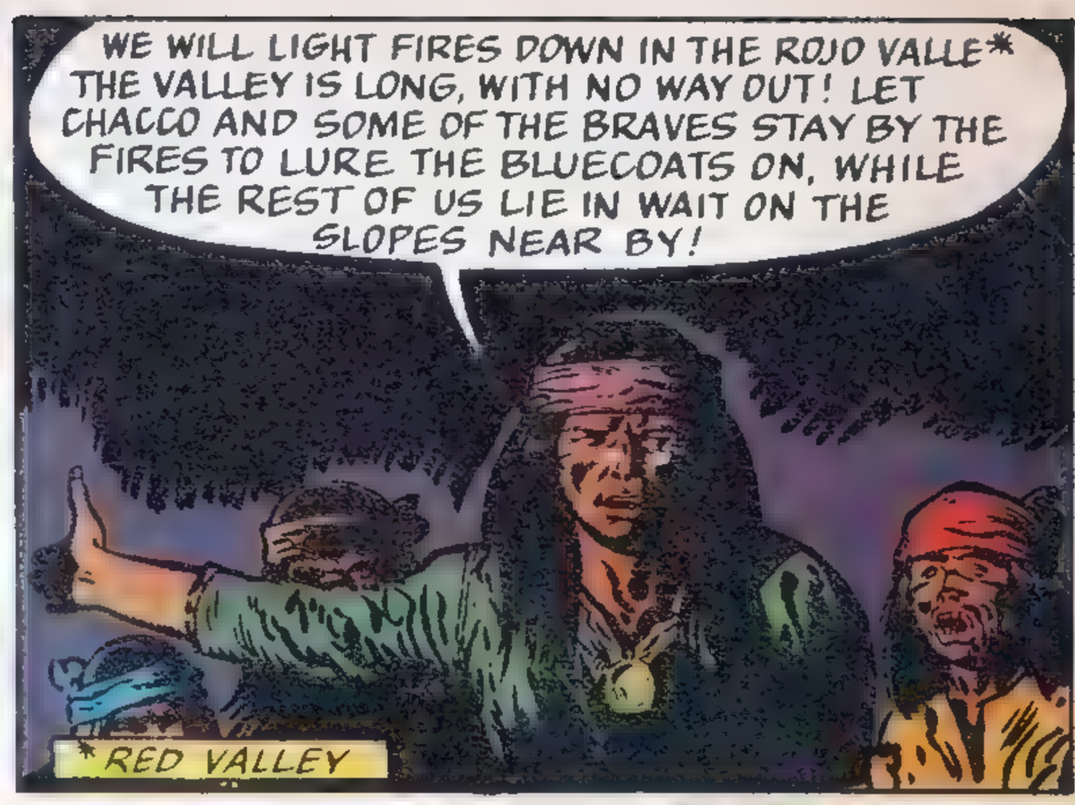
MEANWHILE...
BETTER CAMP HERE AND GET BACK ON THE TRAIL AT DAWN...THAT FOOL CRAIG WILL HAVE HAD TO STOP TOO!

SURE ENOUGH
NO FEAR OF BEING SURPRISED UP HERE...AND TOMORROW I'LL BE ABLE TO SEE THE LIE OF THE LAND...

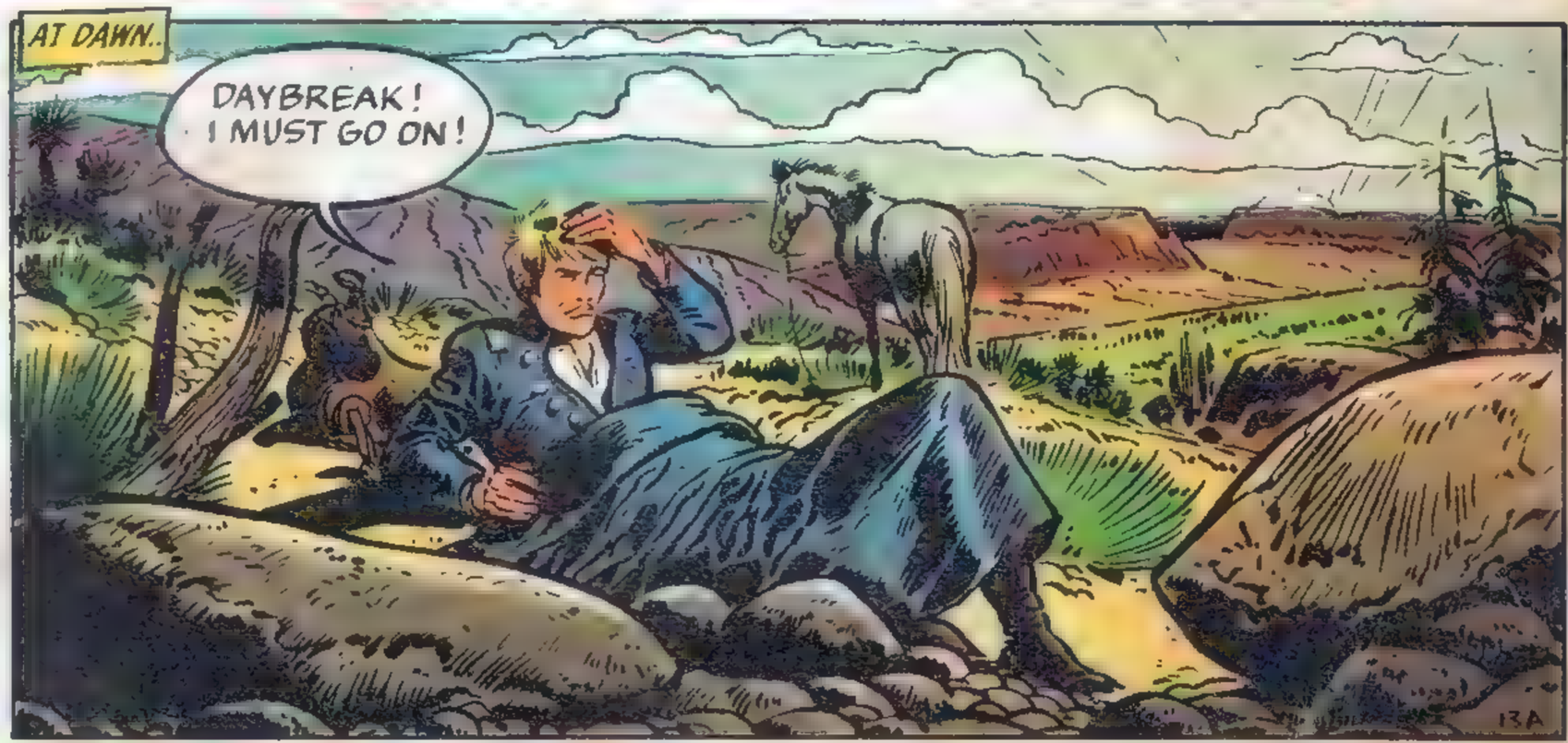

BUT SOME MILES AWAY...
DANGER! PALE-FACES ON OUR TRAIL!!!

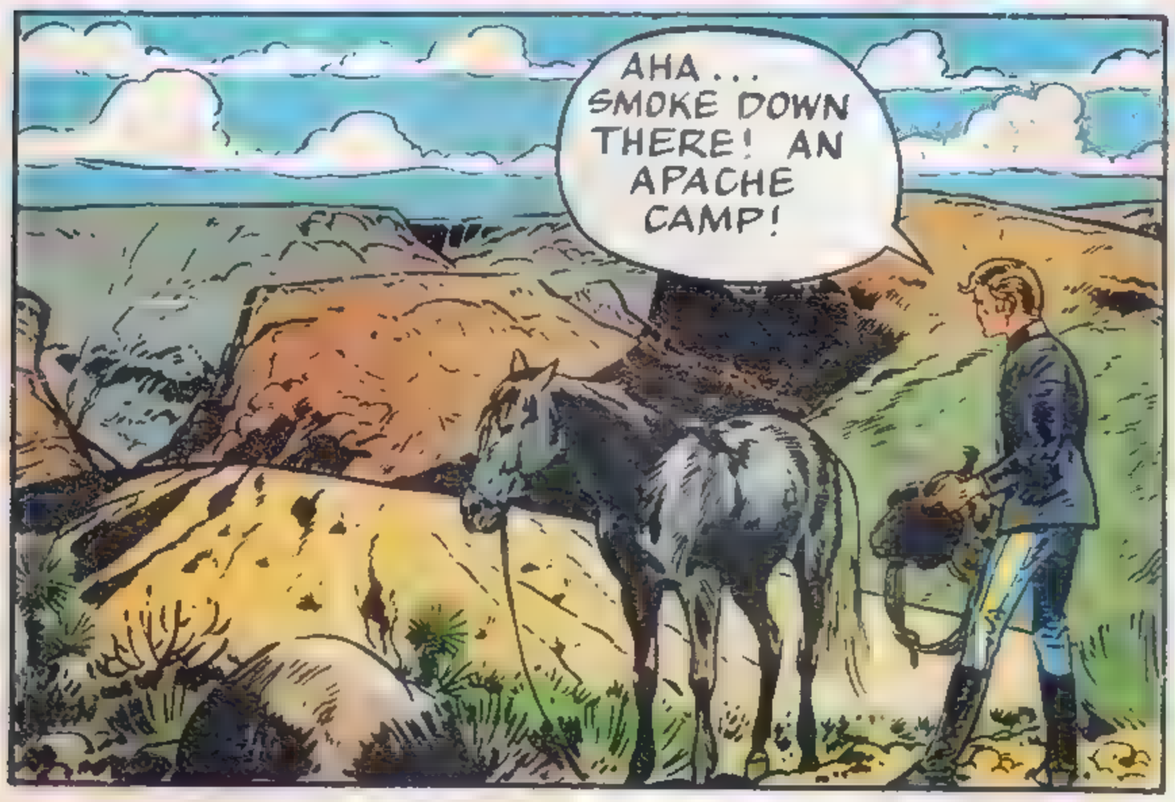
I SAW A BLUECOAT NEAR THE BEAR RIVER...THERE MUST BE MORE MEN BEHIND HIM...
WE WILL SET A TRAP FOR HIM!

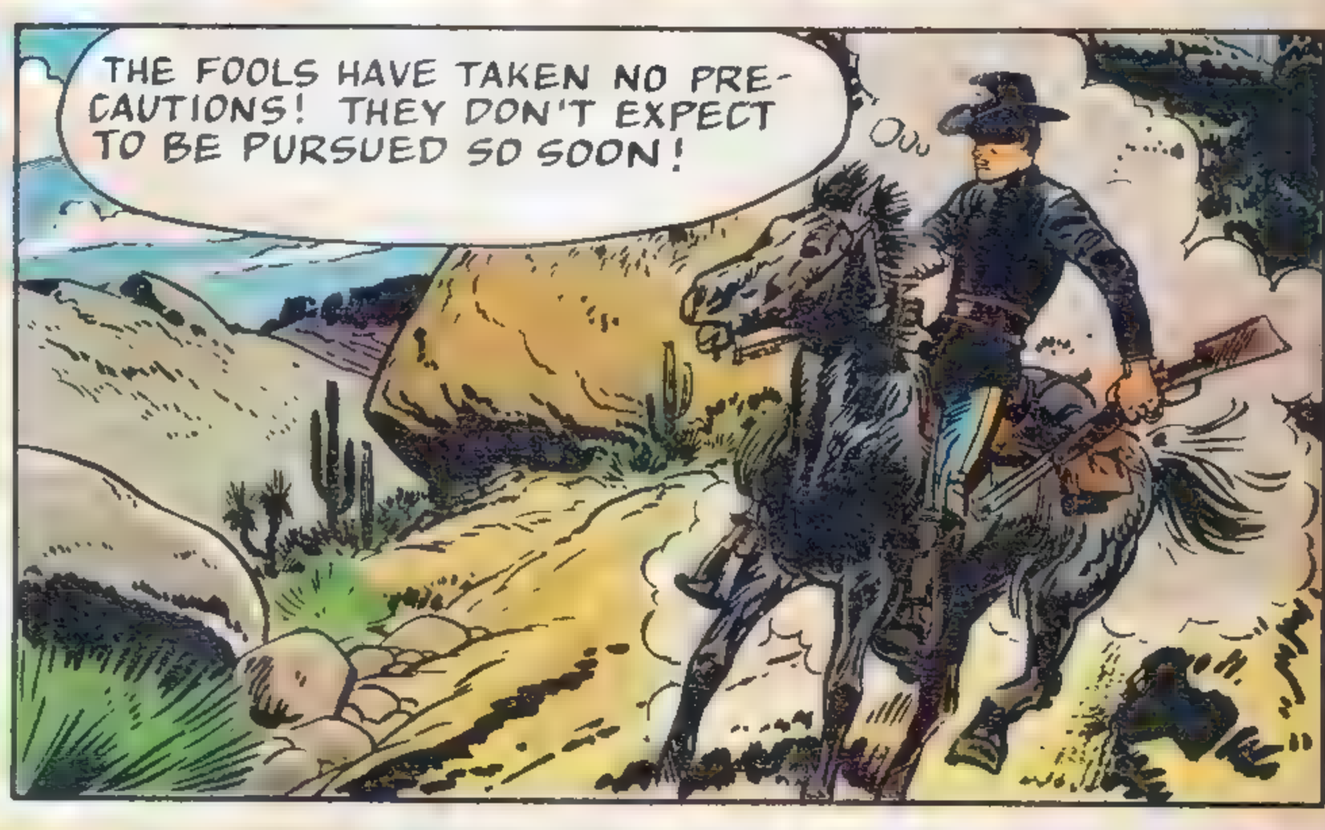

LONG NOSE WAS WISE TO FORBID THE LIGHTING OF FIRES! THE BLUE-COATS WOULD SEE US!
THEY HAVE COME IN PURSUIT SOONER THAN THE WARRIORS EX-PECTED...
THEY WILL REGRET IT!

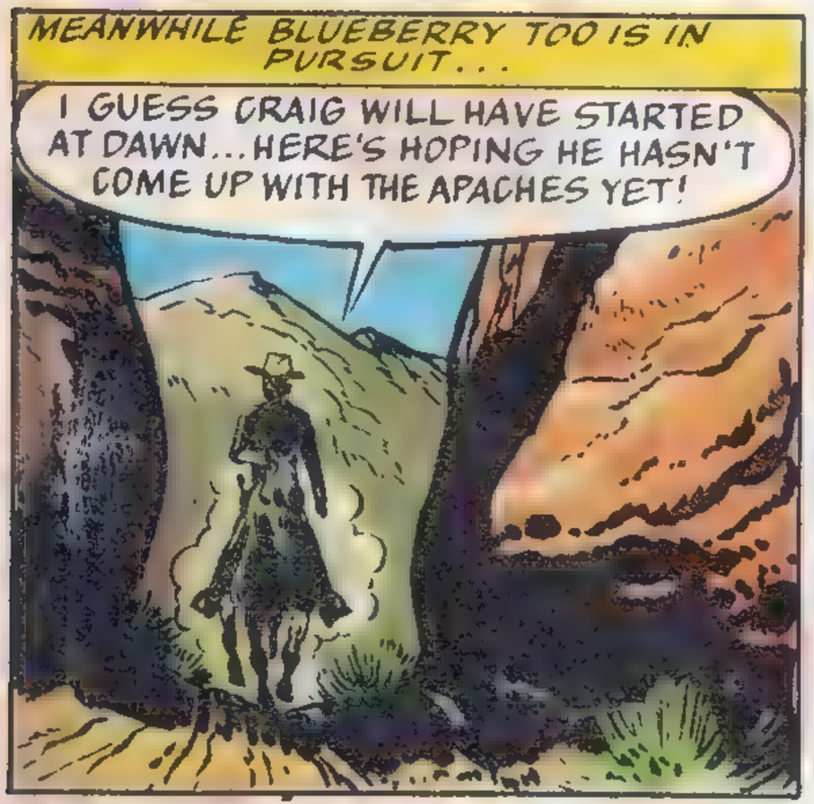

WE WILL LIGHT FIRES DOWN IN THE ROJO VALLE* THE VALLEY IS LONG, WITH NO WAY OUT! LET CHACCO AND SOME OF THE BRAVES STAY BY THE FIRES TO LURE THE BLUECOATS ON, WHILE THE REST OF US LIE IN WAIT ON THE SLOPES NEAR BY!
*RED VALLEY

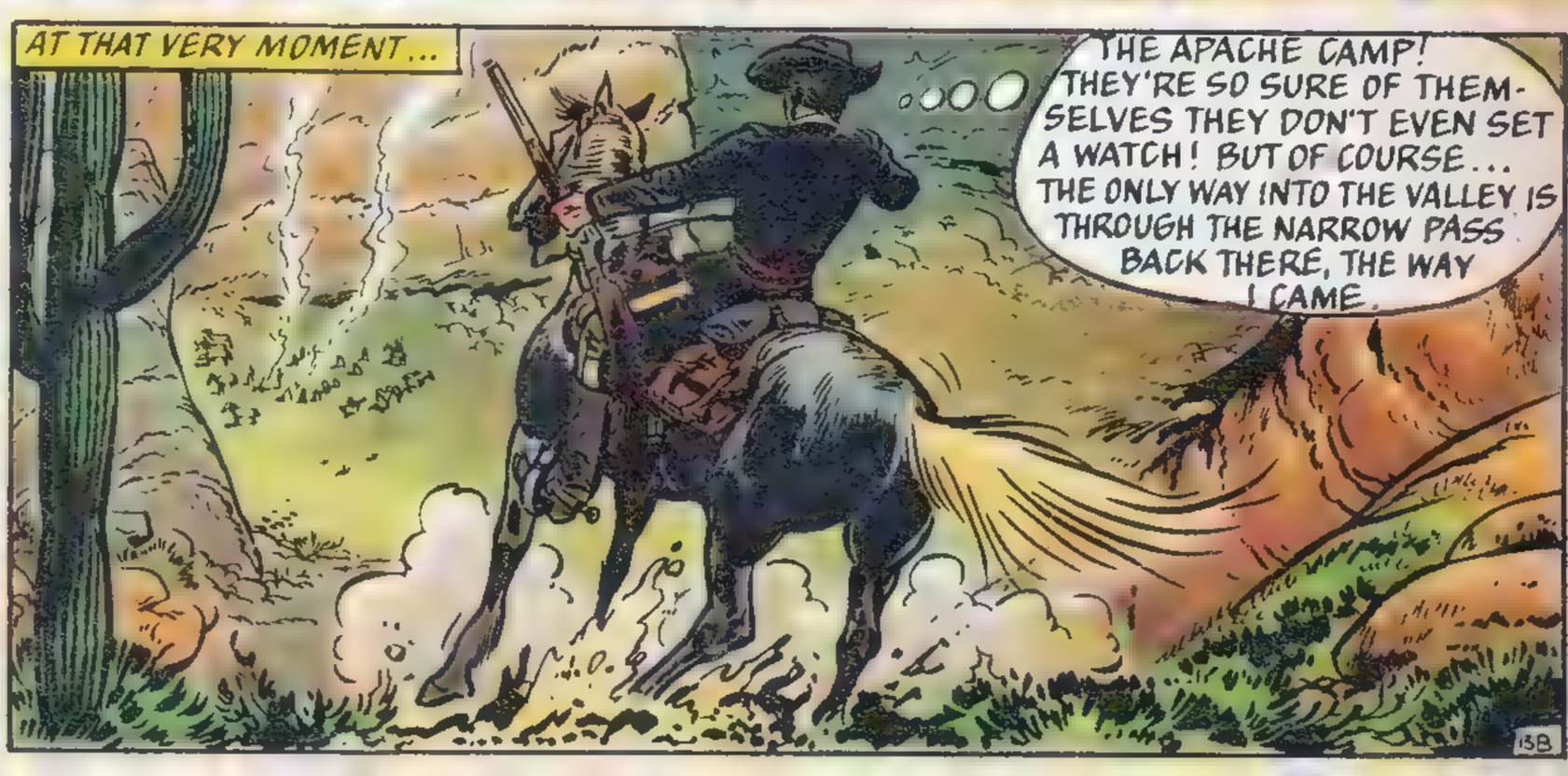
WHEN THEY SEE OUR FIRES, THE PALEFACES WILL RIDE INTO THE TRAP, HOPING TO SUR-PRISE US... INSTEAD, WE WILL SURPRISE THEM!


AT DAWN..
DAYBREAK! I MUST GO ON!

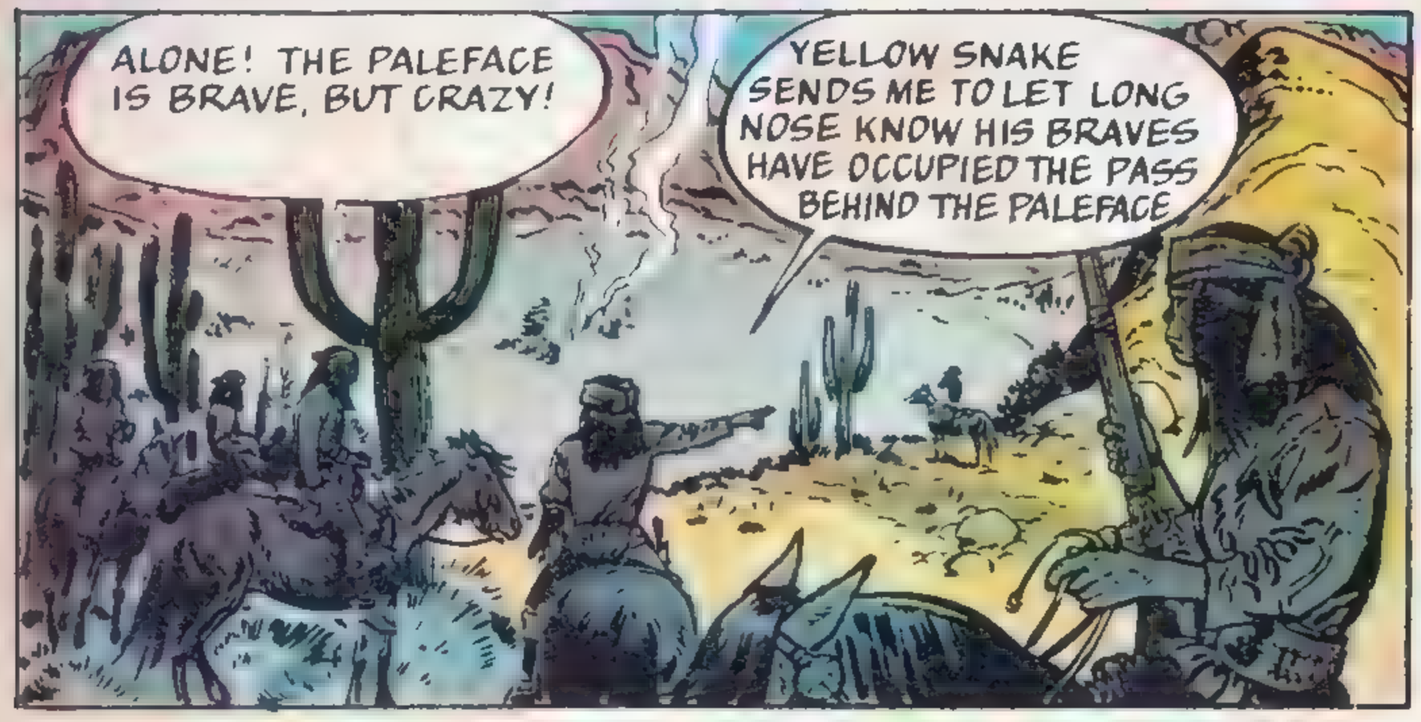

AHA... SMOKE DOWN THERE! AN APACHE CAMP!

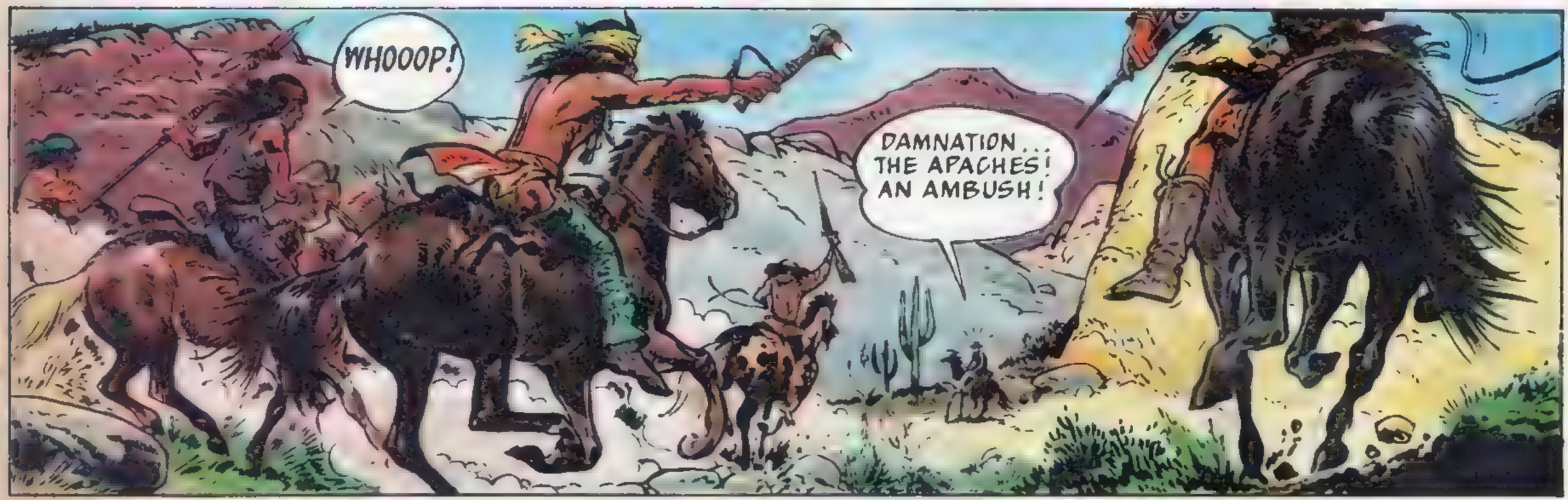

THE FOOLS HAVE TAKEN NO PRE-CAUTIONS! THEY DON'T EXPECT TO BE PURSUED SO SOON!

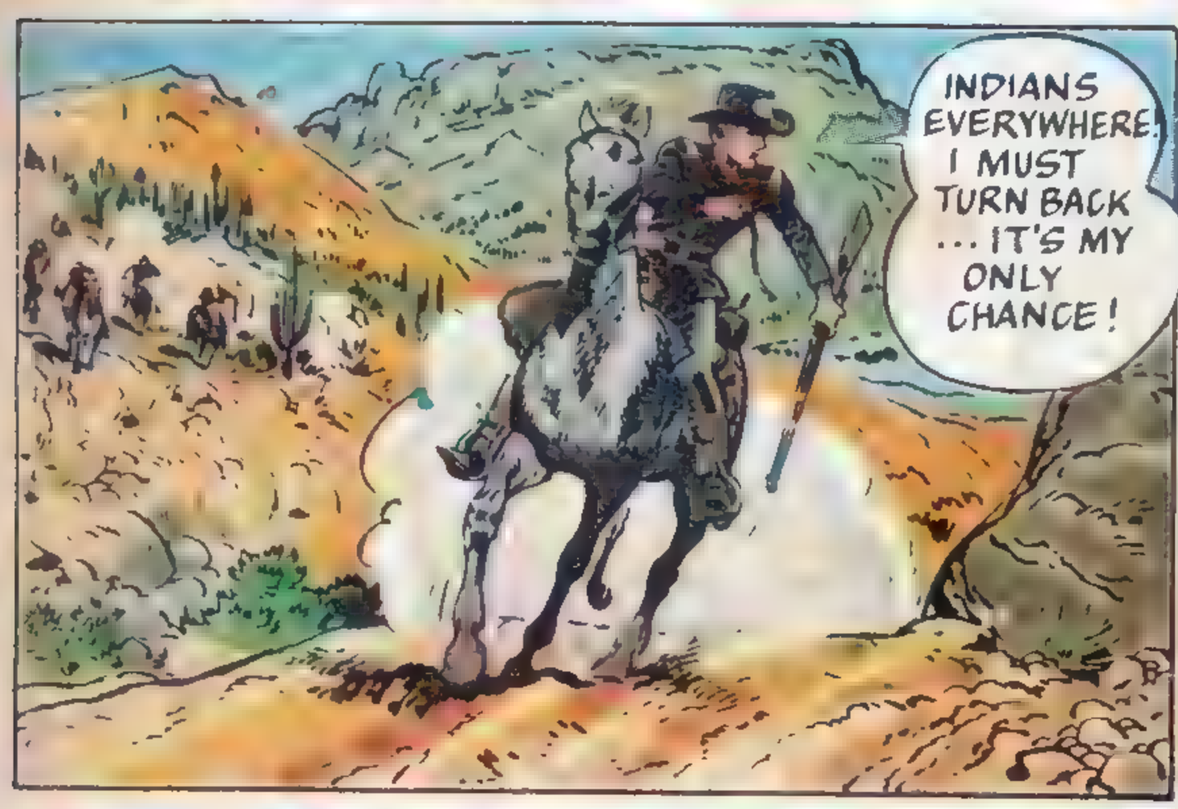

MEANWHILE BLUEBERRY TOO IS IN PURSUIT...
I GUESS CRAIG WILL HAVE STARTED AT DAWN... HERE'S HOPING HE HASN'T COME UP WITH THE APACHES YET!

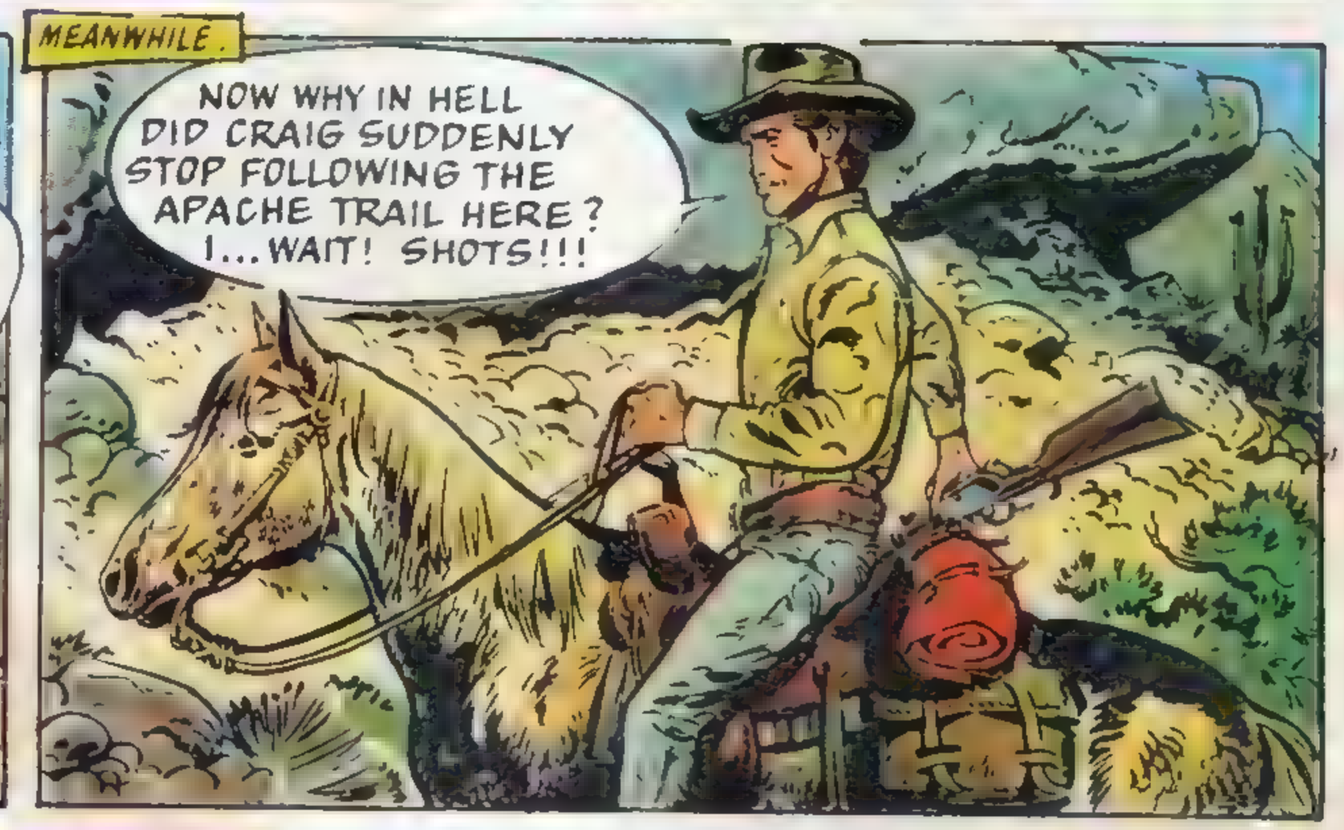

AT THAT VERY MOMENT...
THE APACHE CAMP! THEY'RE SO SURE OF THEM-SELVES THEY DON'T EVEN SET A WATCH! BUT OF COURSE... THE ONLY WAY INTO THE VALLEY IS THROUGH THE NARROW PASS BACK THERE, THE WAY I CAME.

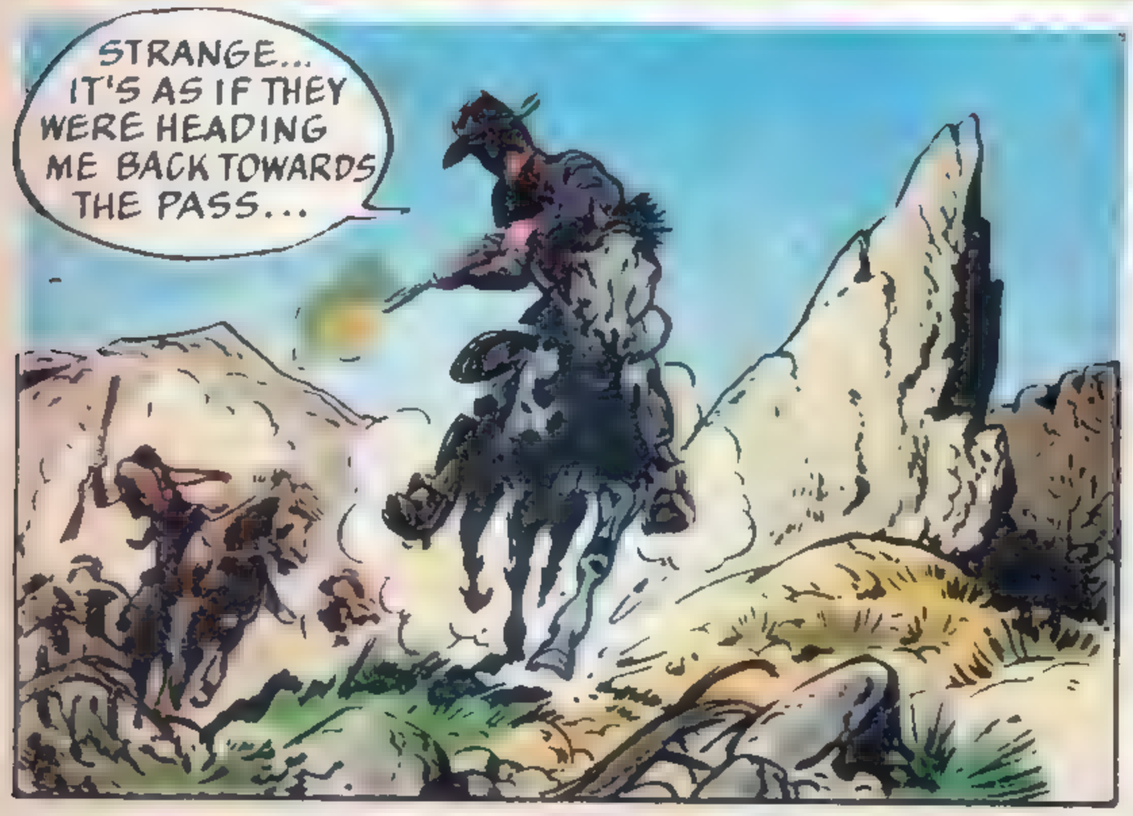
BUT THOUGH CRAIG THINKS HE IS WATCHING THE INDIANS UNSEEN, KEEN EYES ARE FOLLOWING HIS EVERY MOVE...

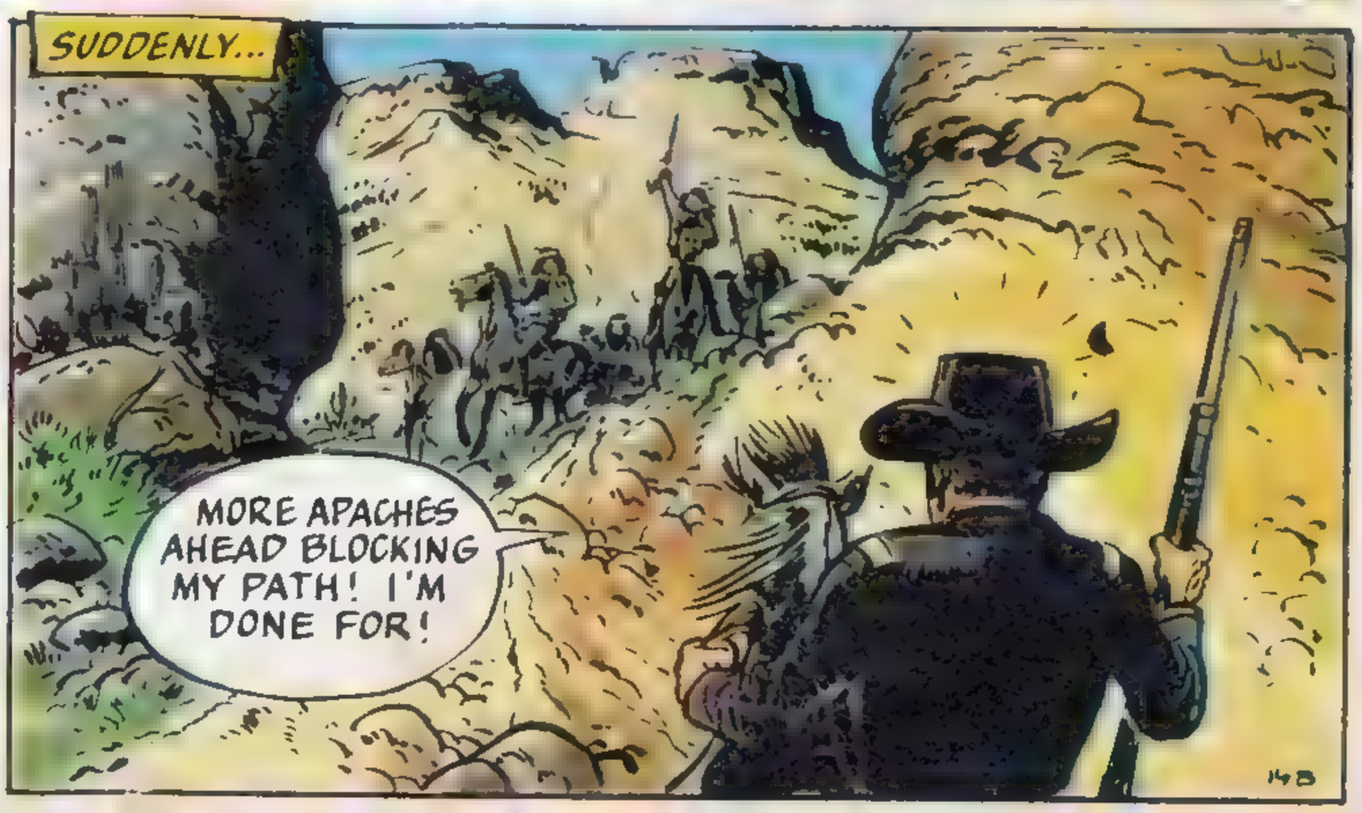




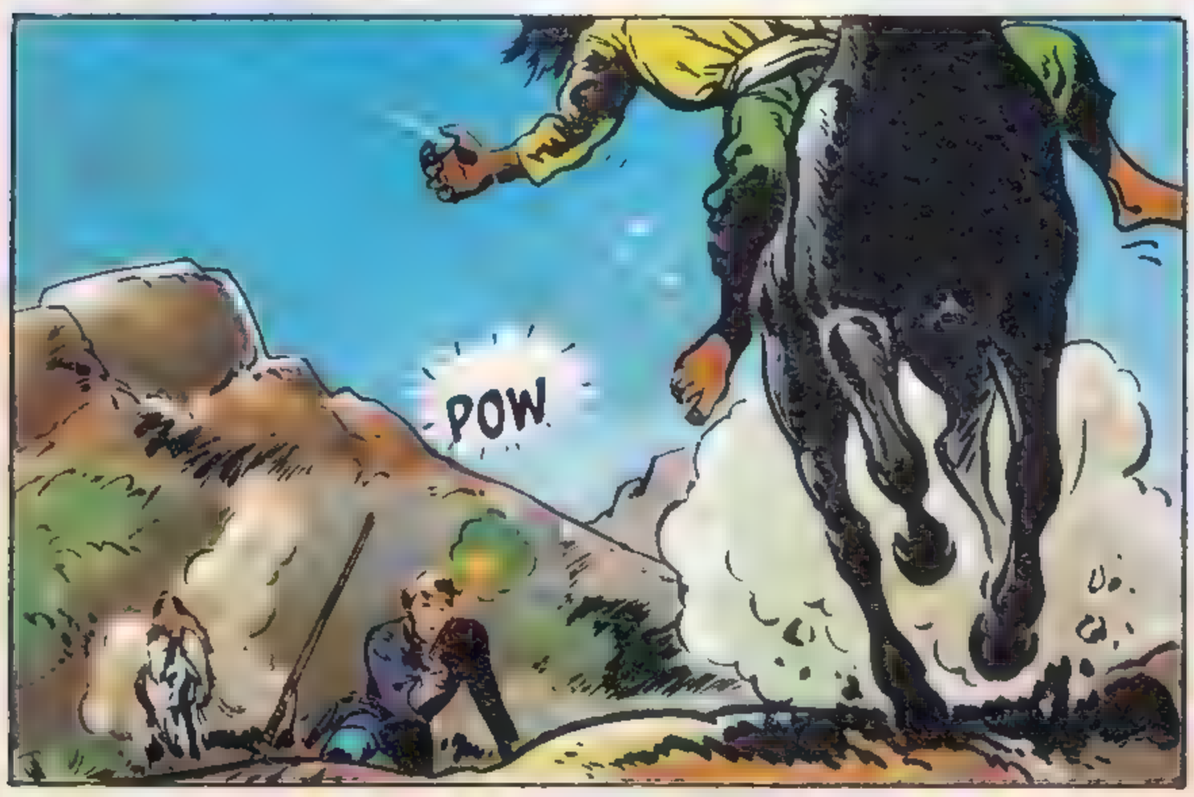


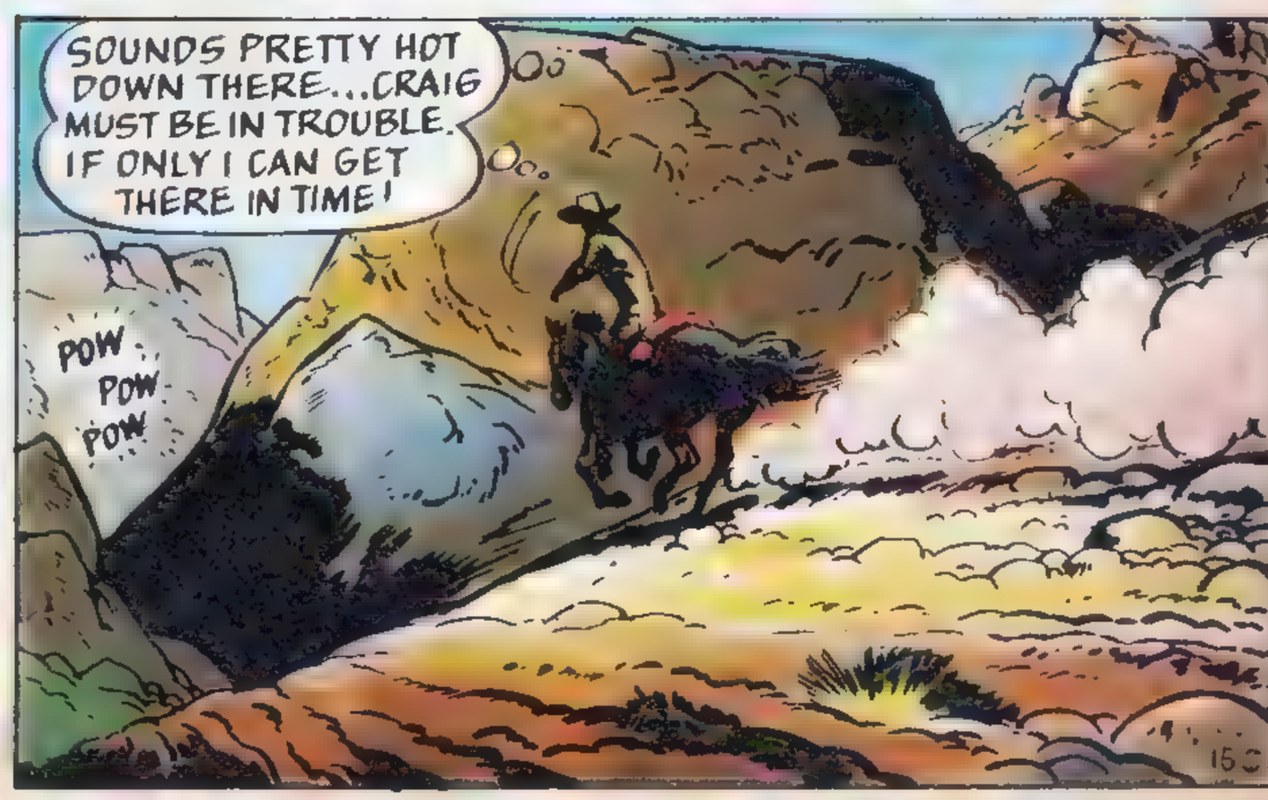


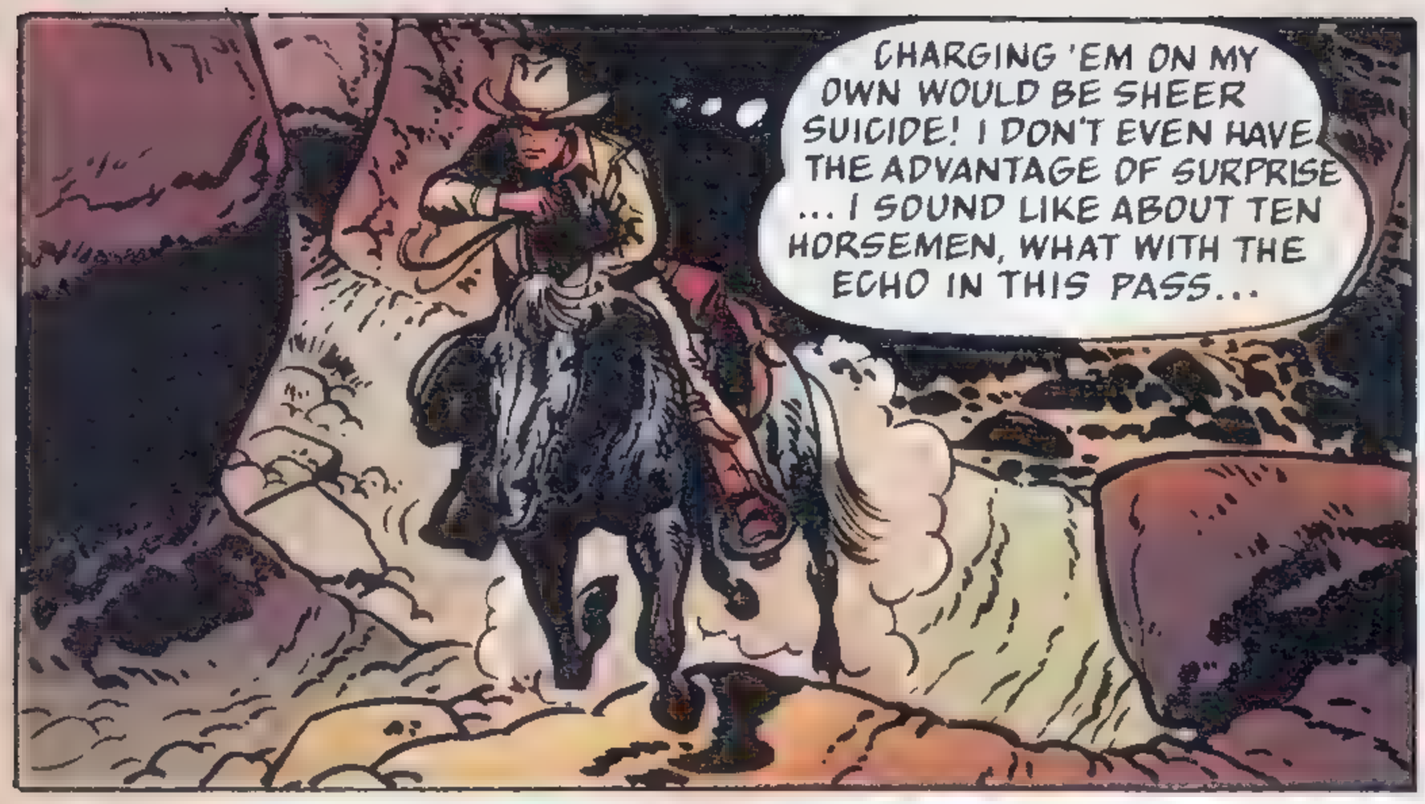




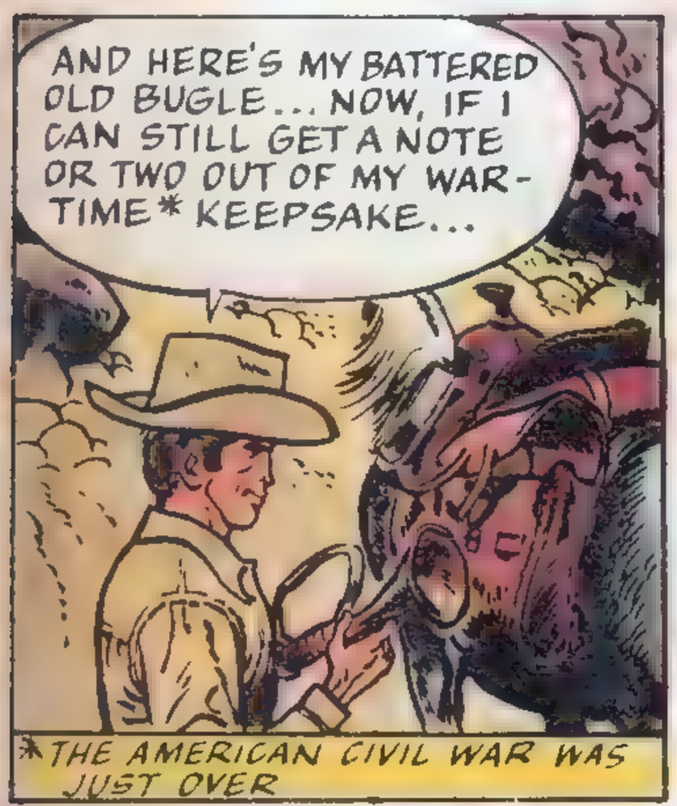
SWERVING ABRUPTLY, THE UNFORTUNATE OFFICER TRIES TO ESCAPE HIS NEW ASSAILANTS, BUT THE DEADLY CIRCLE IS CLOSING IN AROUND HIM. THE TRAP HAS WORKED . . .

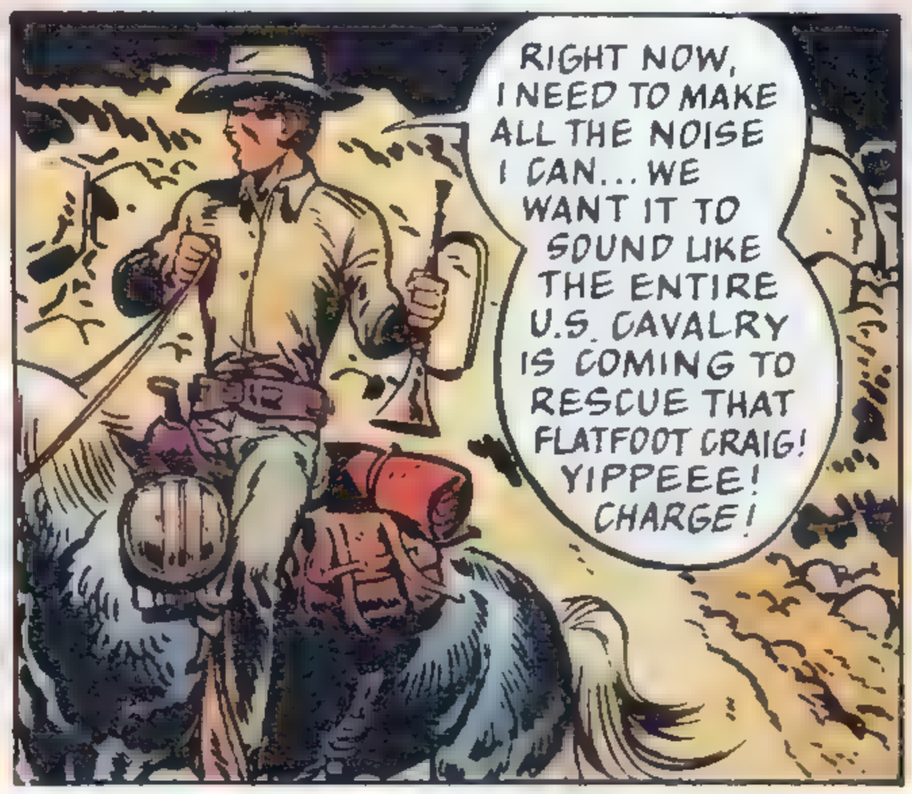




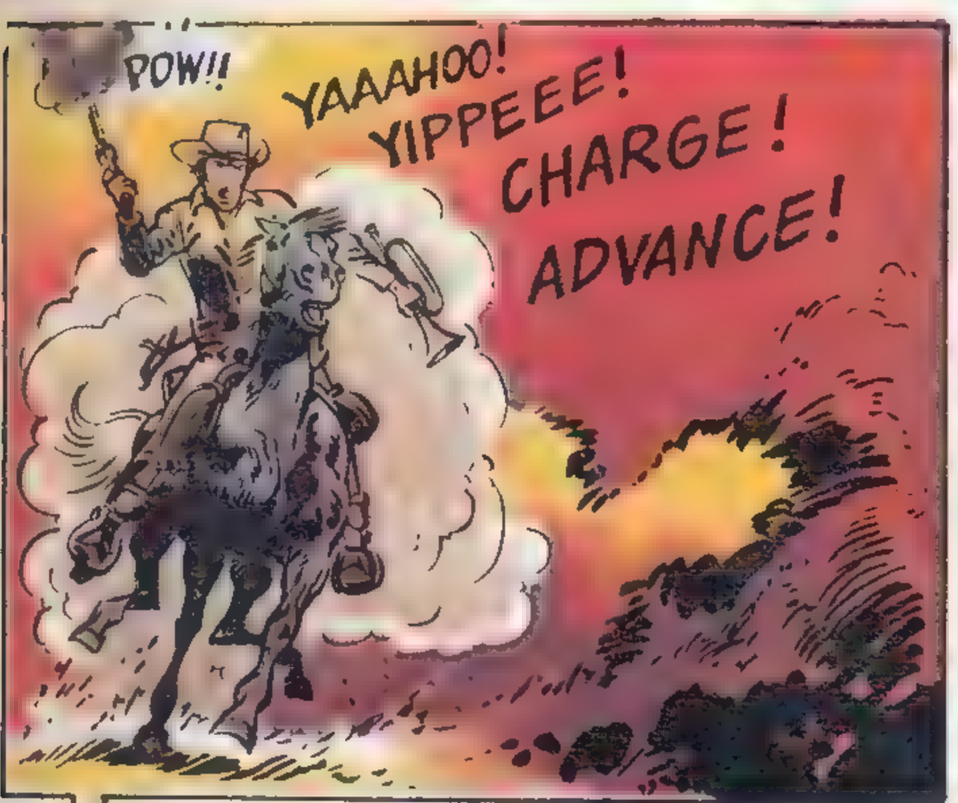

CHARGING 'EM ON MY OWN WOULD BE SHEER SUICIDE! I DON'T EVEN HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF SURPRISE ... I SOUND LIKE ABOUT TEN HORSEMEN, WHAT WITH THE ECHO IN THIS PASS...

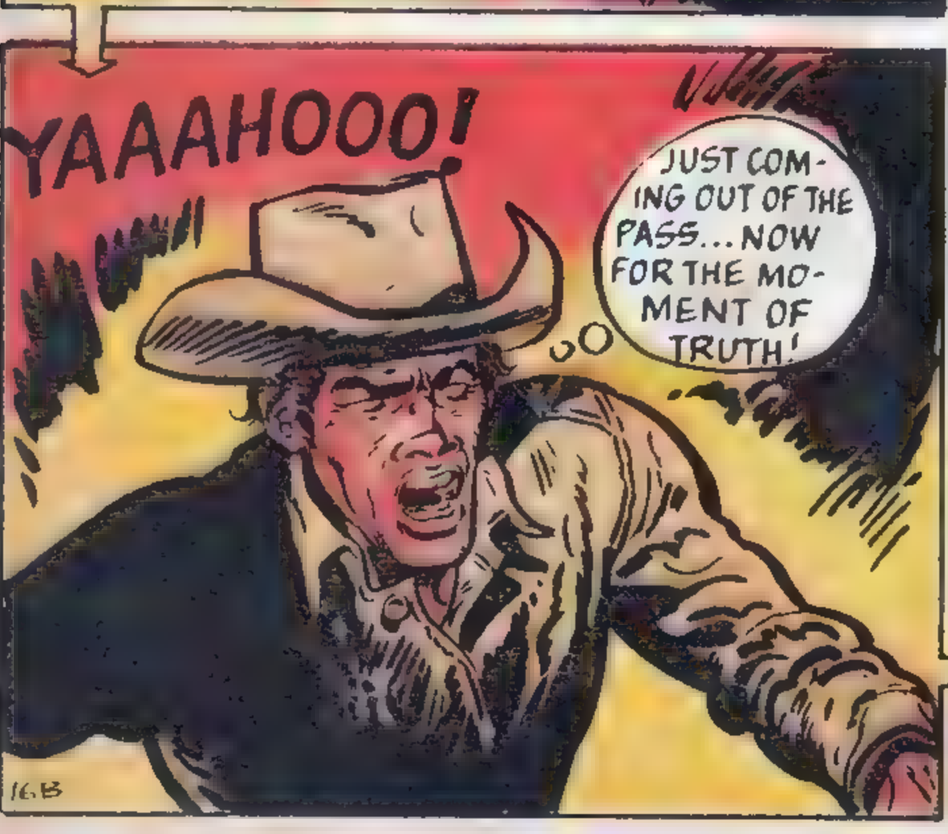
HEY, WAIT! THAT'S AN IDEA ... YES! IT COULD BE THE ANSWER...


AND HERE'S MY BATTERED OLD BUGLE... NOW, IF I CAN STILL GET A NOTE OR TWO OUT OF MY WAR-TIME* KEEPSAKE...
*THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR WAS JUST OVER


RIGHT NOW, I NEED TO MAKE ALL THE NOISE I CAN... WE WANT IT TO SOUND LIKE THE ENTIRE U.S. CAVALRY IS COMING TO RESCUE THAT FLATFOOT CRAIG! YIPPEEE! CHARGE!

TANTANTARA!!! TANTANTARAAA!!!


POW!!
YAAAHOO! YIPPEEE! CHARGE! ADVANCE!


YAAAHOOO!
JUST COMING OUT OF THE PASS... NOW FOR THE MOMENT OF TRUTH!
16B

AMPLIFIED AND TOSSED BACK AND FORTH BY THE ECHO, THE SOUND OF BUGLE CALLS, GALLOPING HOOVES, SHOTS, AND BLUEBERRY'S YELLS, ROLLS LIKE THUNDER AROUND THE ROJO VALLE AS THE INDIANS START CLOSING IN FOR THE KILL...
TANTANTARAAA ....ARGE! POW POOW
THE BLUECOATS!
???!

FOR A FEW SECONDS PANIC AND CONFUSION REIGN... AND SUDDENLY...

THANK GOD! HELP ON THE WAY! IT'S A MIRACLE... JUST AS I WAS RUNNING OUT OF CARTRIDGES!

THE BLUE-COATS! BACK! BACK!

AND BLUEBERRY GALLOPS OUT OF THE PASS, SHOUTING AND FIRING SHOTS ...

HOLY MOSES, IT WORKED! THE APACHES ARE RUN-NING!

GIR

SURE ENOUGH, BELIEVING THAT THERE IS A LARGE BODY OF MEN AFTER THEM, THE INDIANS ARE FLEEING FOR THEIR LIVES.

17A.

AND GLORY BE, THERE'S CRAIG...ALIVE! I MUST REACH HIM BEFORE THOSE RED DEVILS SEE WHAT'S UP!

CRAIG! HEY THERE ... CRAIG!

POW!!!

B... BLUE ... BLUEBERRY!

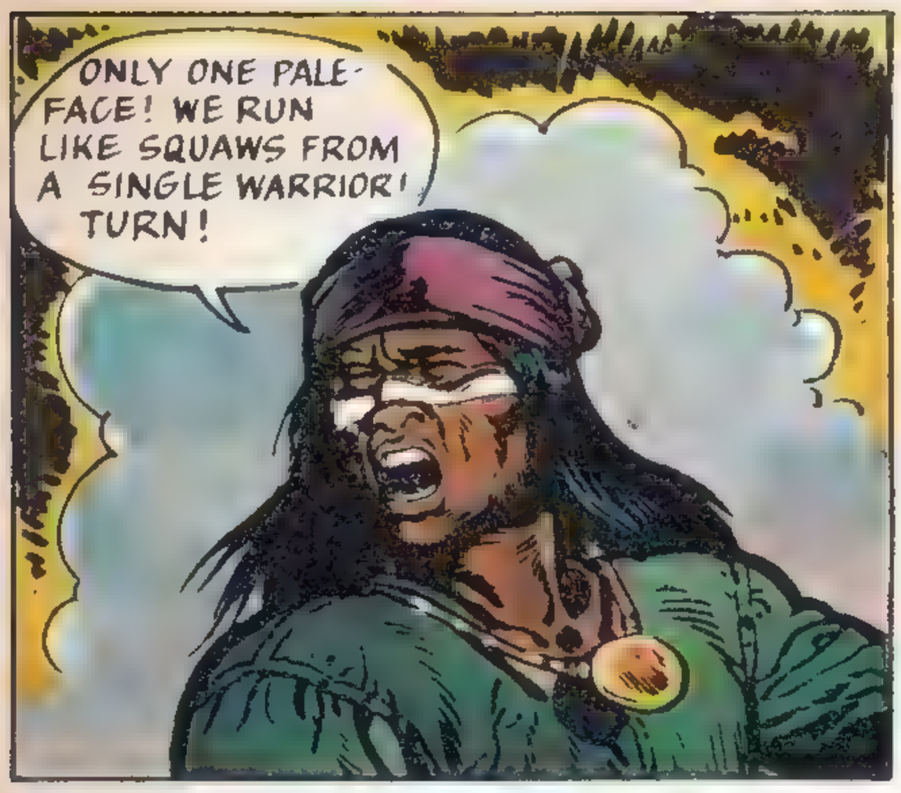
GET UP BEHIND ME, CRAIG! QUICK!

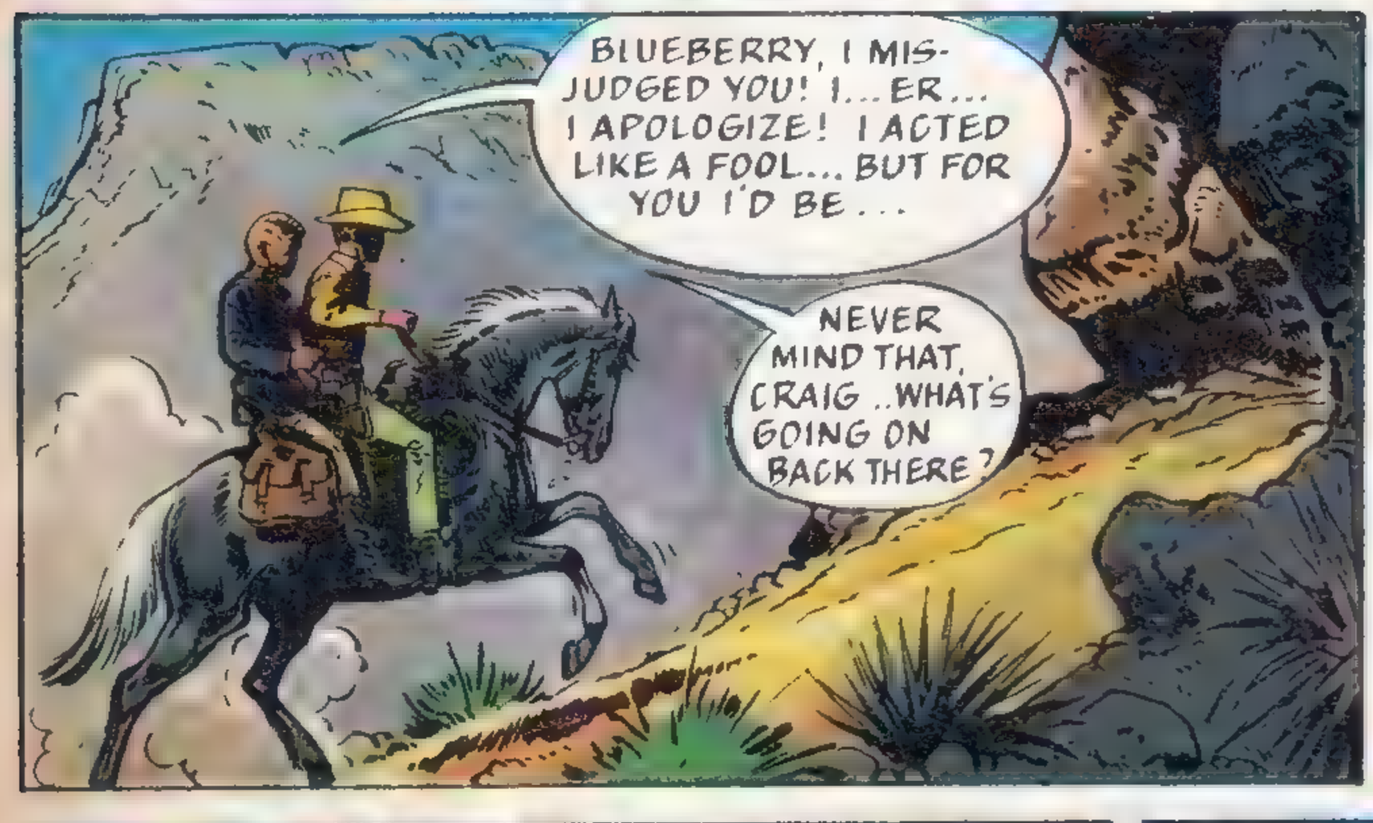
YOU... YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN!

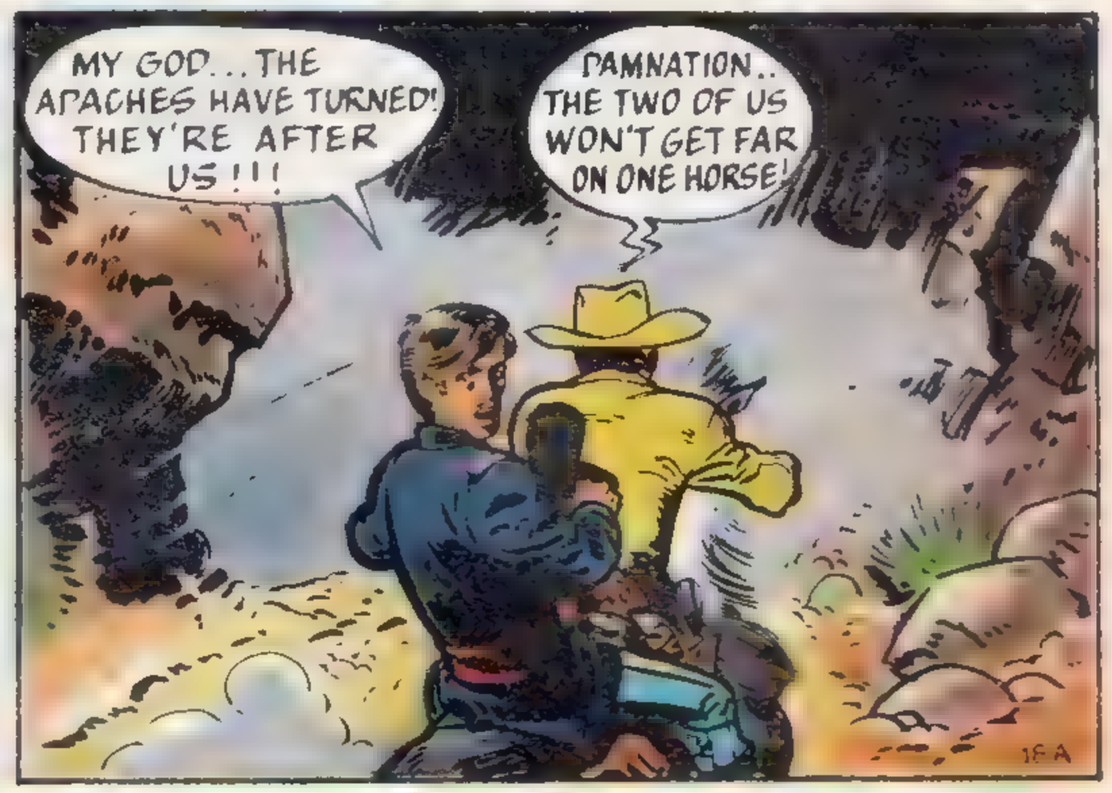
AT THAT MOMENT...

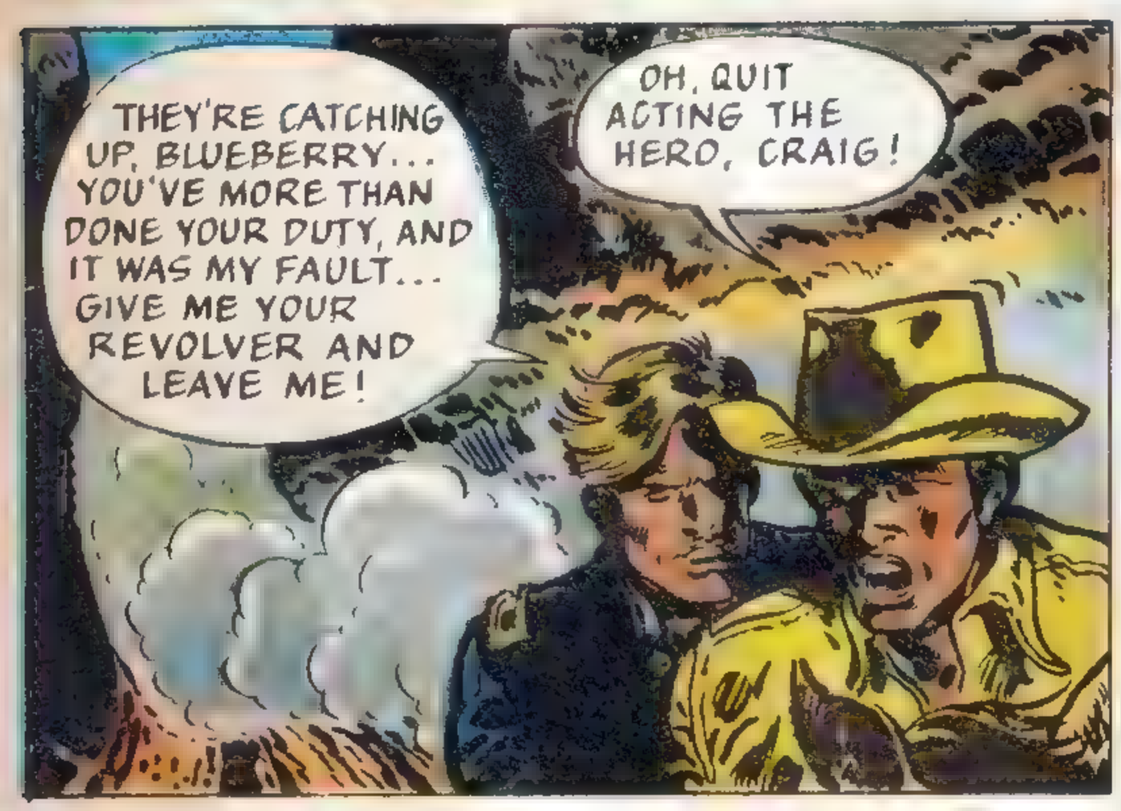
?!!!

HO THERE! LOOK, BROTHERS!

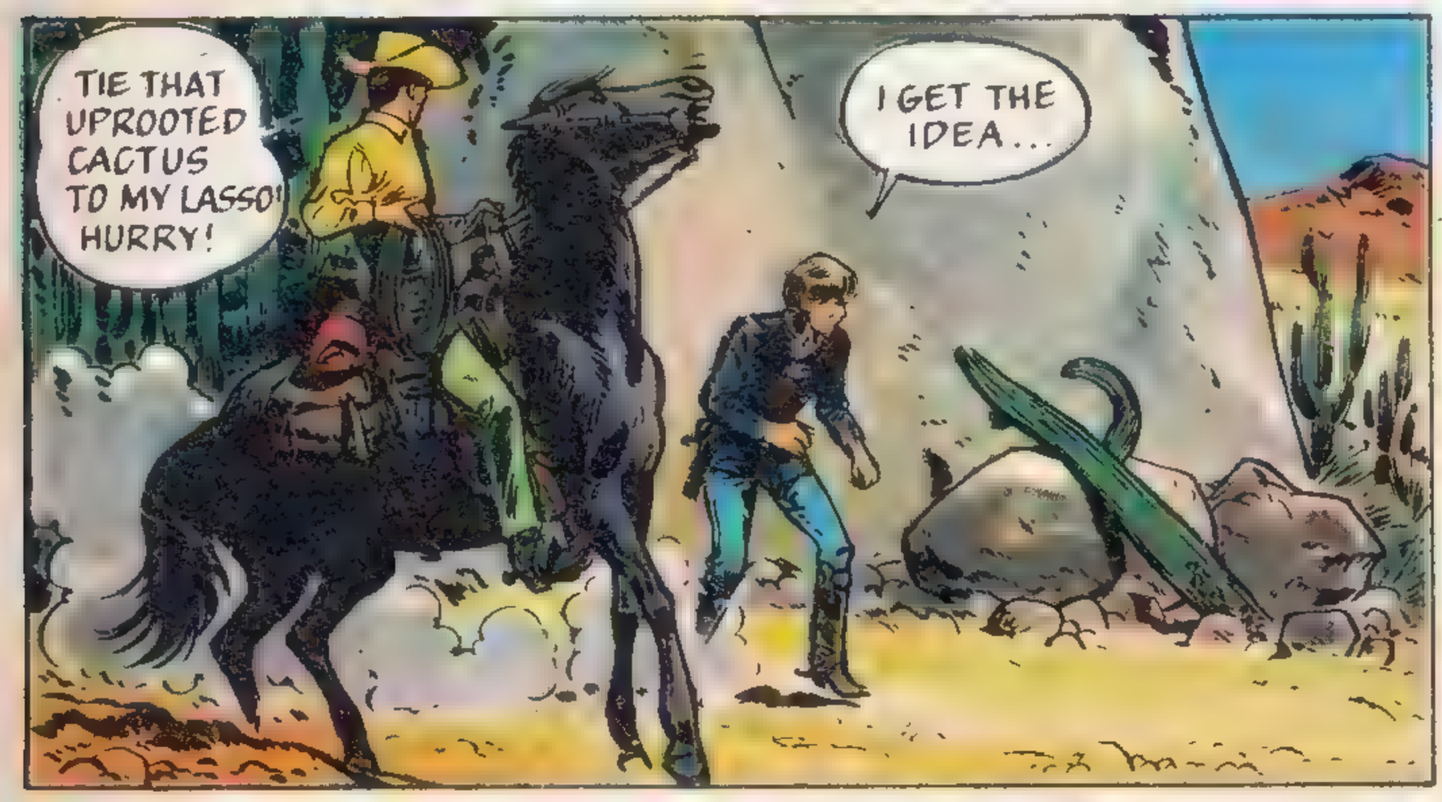

ONLY ONE PALE-FACE! WE RUN LIKE SQUAWS FROM A SINGLE WARRIOR! TURN!

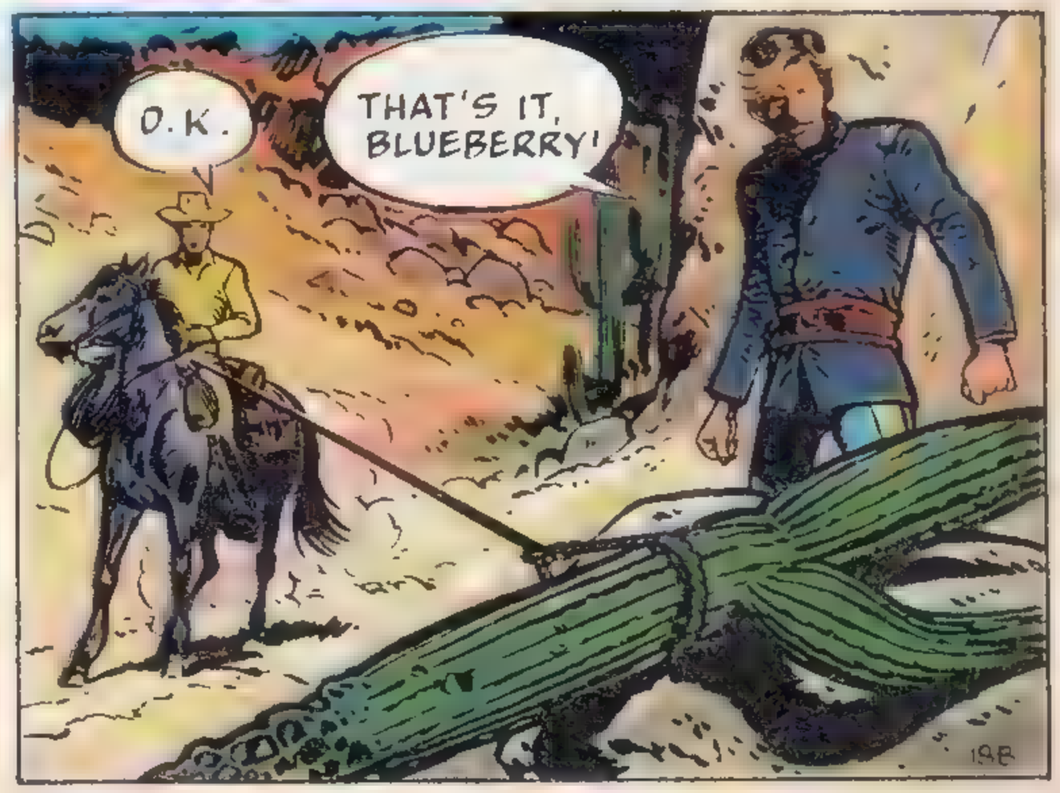

BLUEBERRY, I MIS-JUDGED YOU! I...ER... I APOLOGIZE! I ACTED LIKE A FOOL... BUT FOR YOU I'D BE...
NEVER MIND THAT, CRAIG ..WHAT'S GOING ON BACK THERE?

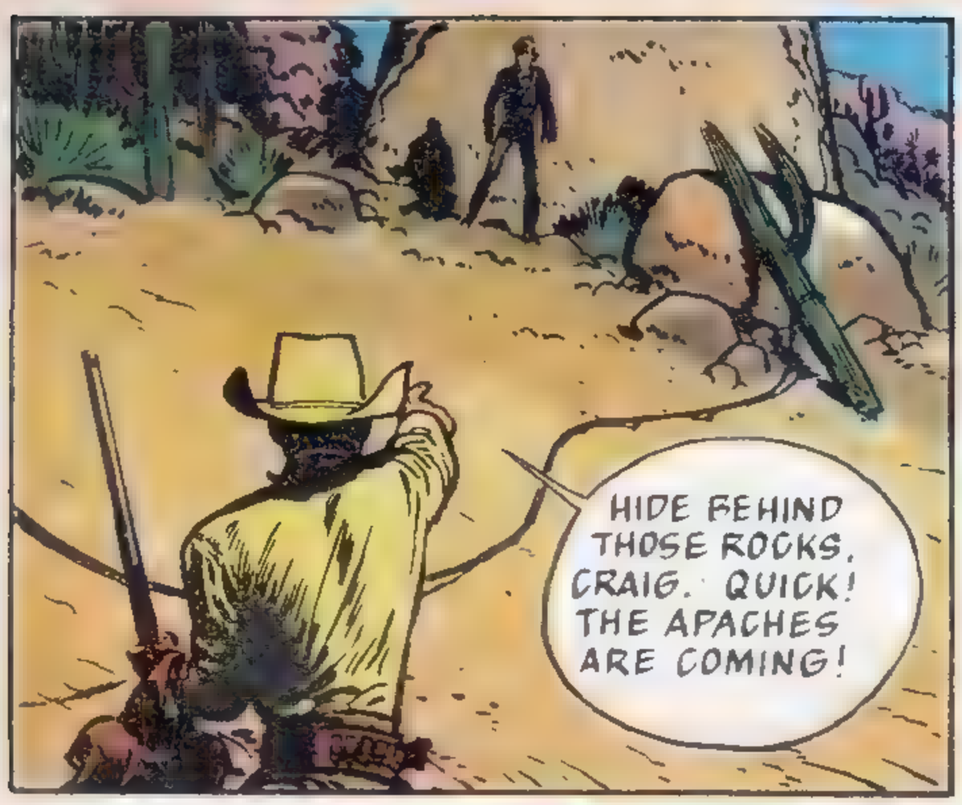

MY GOD... THE APACHES HAVE TURNED! THEY'RE AFTER US!!!
DAMNATION.. THE TWO OF US WON'T GET FAR ON ONE HORSE!

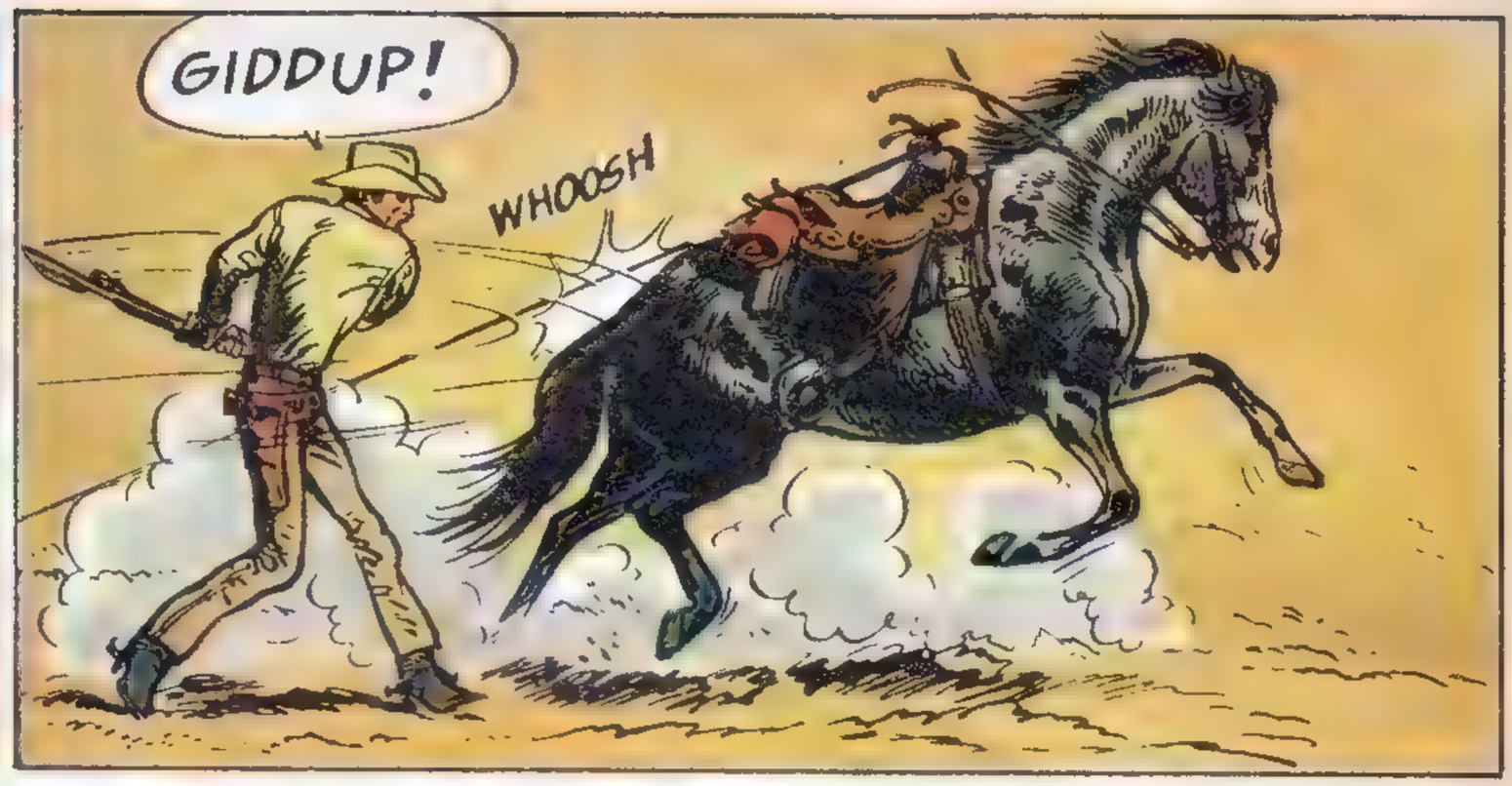

THEY'RE CATCHING UP, BLUEBERRY... YOU'VE MORE THAN DONE YOUR DUTY, AND IT WAS MY FAULT... GIVE ME YOUR REVOLVER AND LEAVE ME!
OH, QUIT ACTING THE HERO, CRAIG!

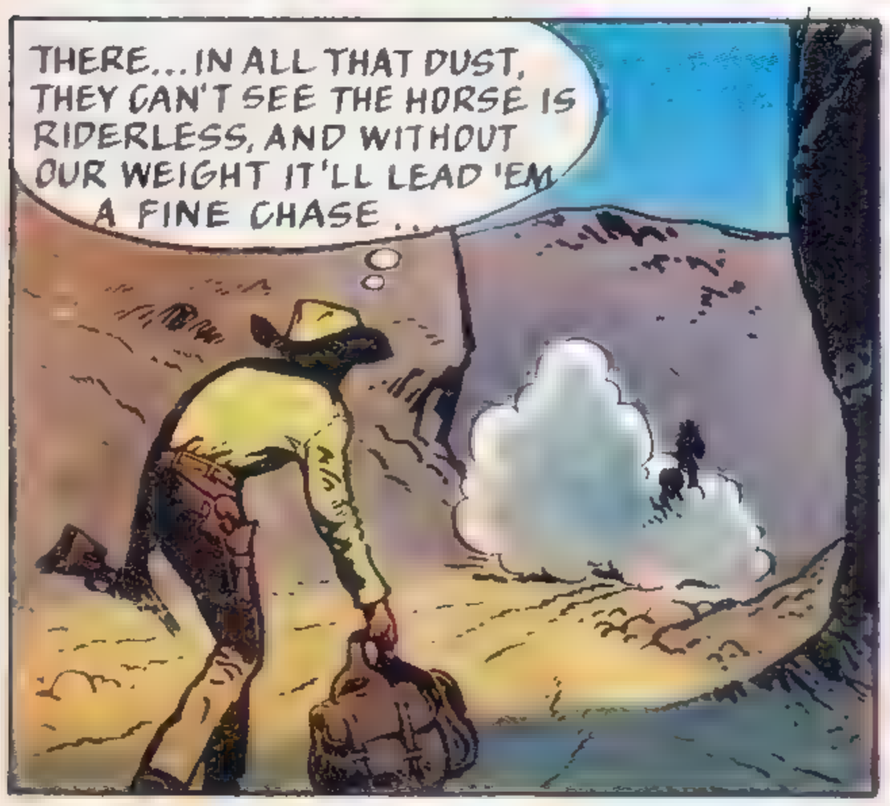
CRAIG! QUICK! DISMOUNT!
??!

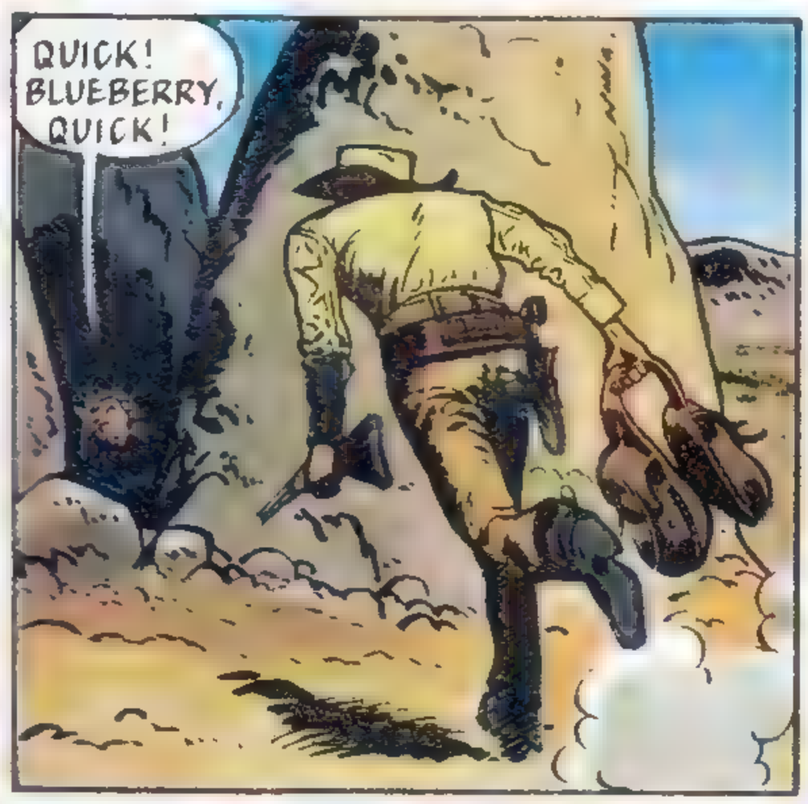

TIE THAT UPROOTED CACTUS TO MY LASSO! HURRY!
I GET THE IDEA...


O.K.
THAT'S IT, BLUEBERRY!


HIDE BEHIND THOSE ROCKS, CRAIG. QUICK! THE APACHES ARE COMING!

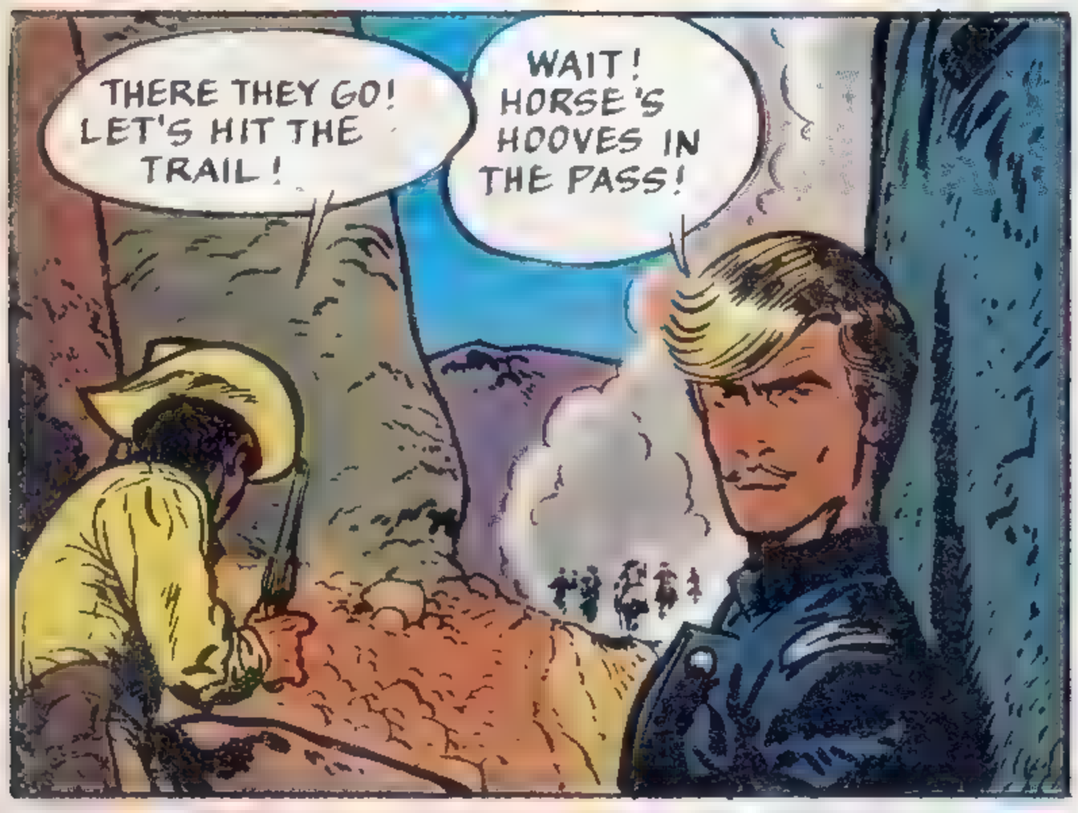

GIDDUP!
WHOOSH

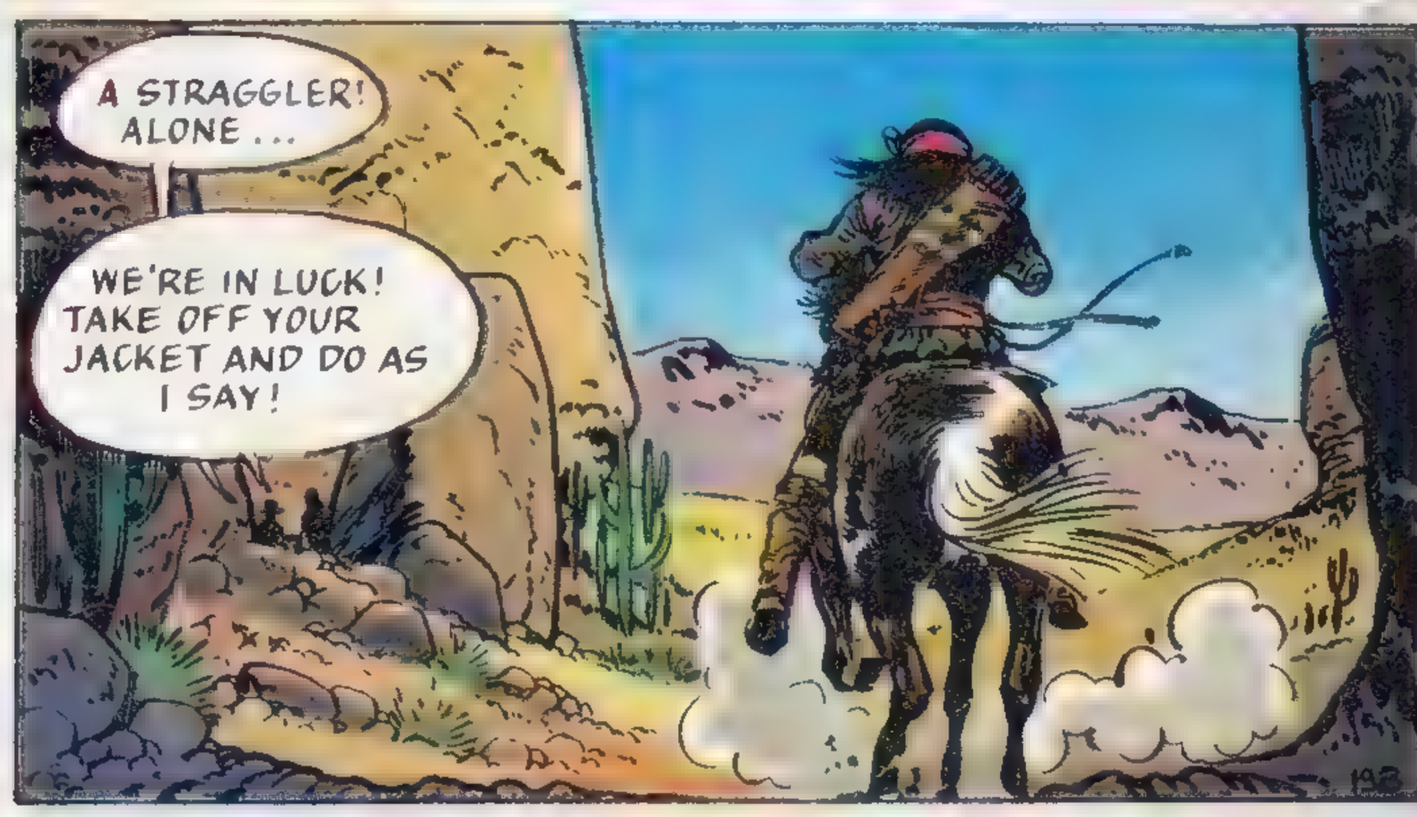

THERE... IN ALL THAT DUST, THEY CAN'T SEE THE HORSE IS RIDERLESS, AND WITHOUT OUR WEIGHT IT'LL LEAD 'EM A FINE CHASE ...

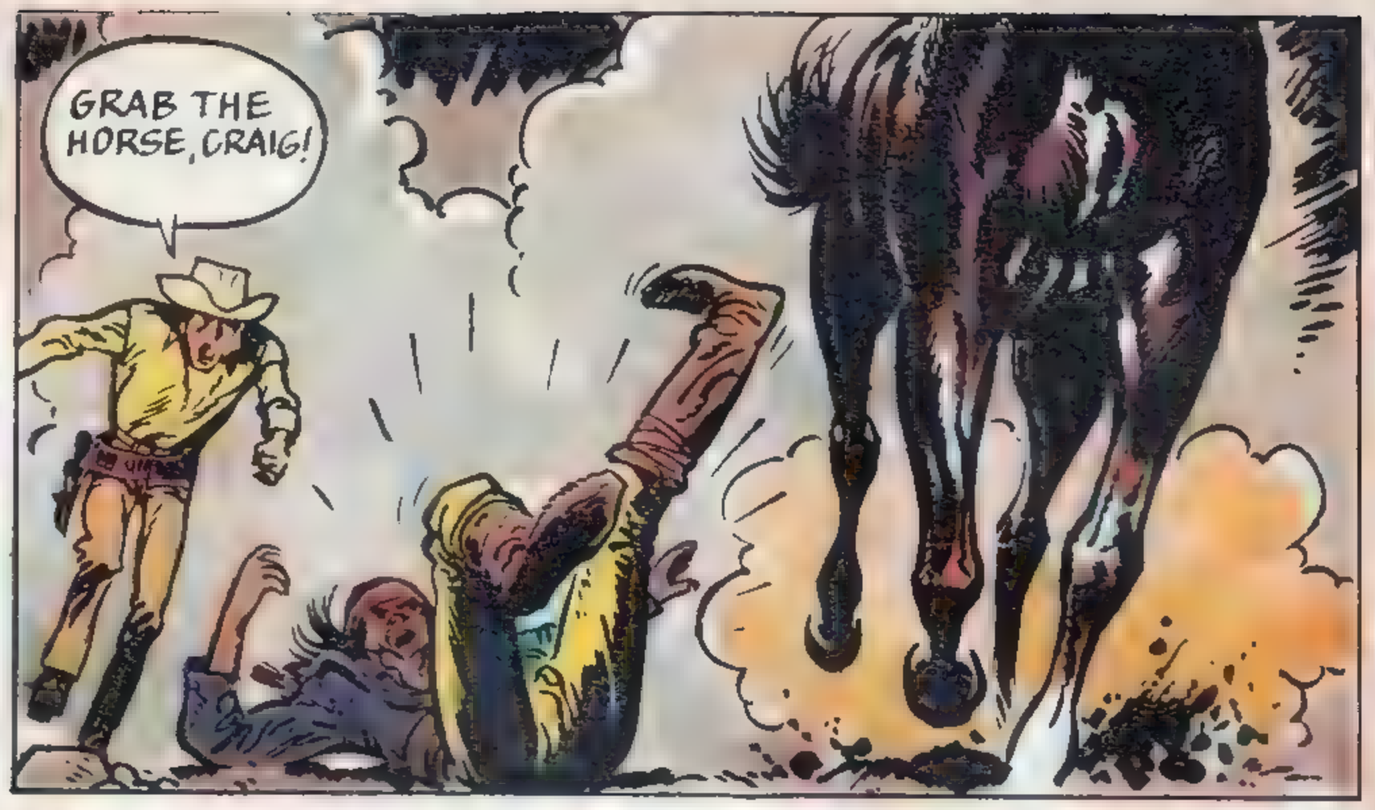

QUICK! BLUEBERRY, QUICK!

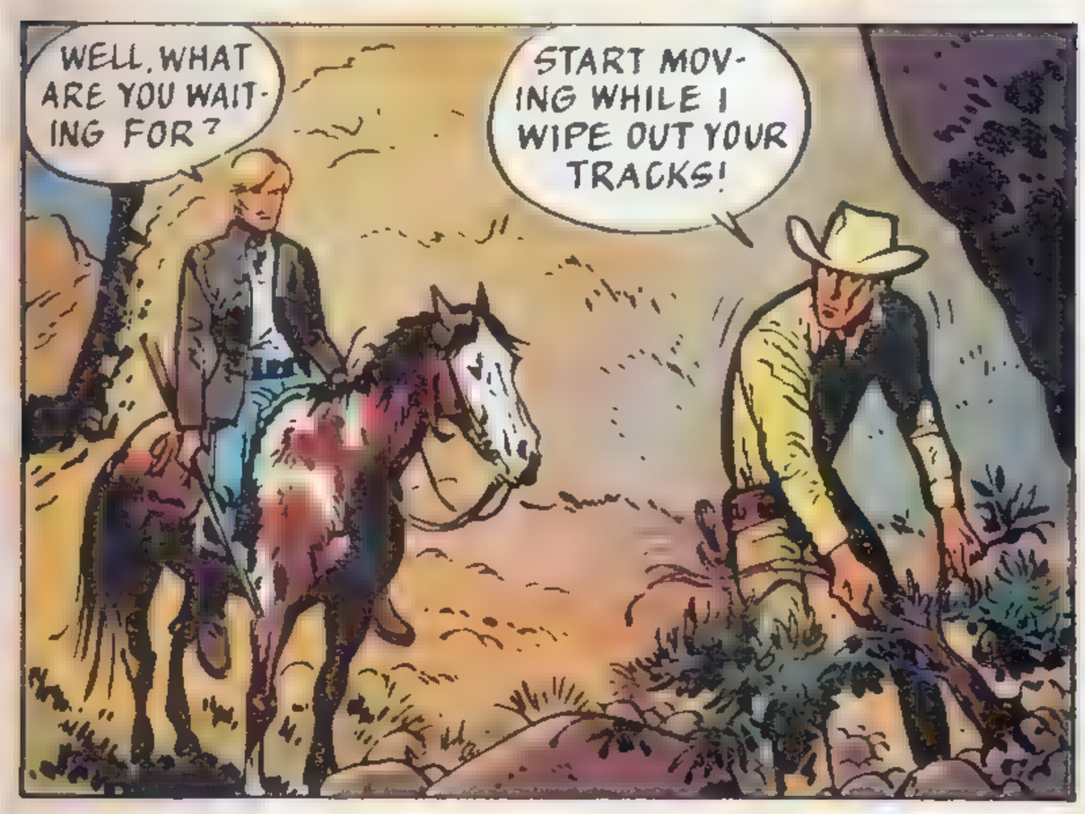
JUST IN TIME ... HERE THEY COME!

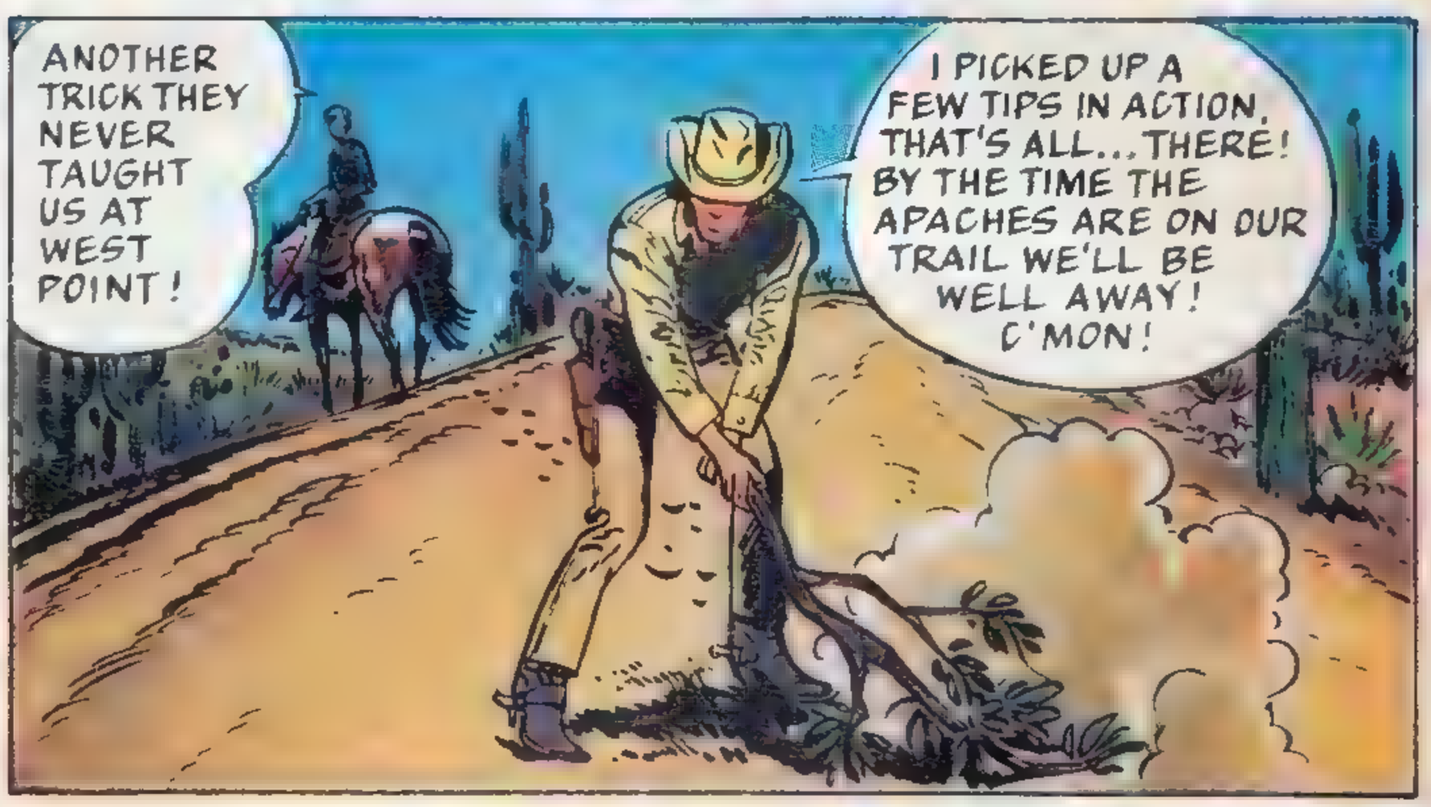
JUST IN TIME INDEED...FOR A SPLIT SECOND LATER, THE CROWD OF YELLING REDSKINS GALLOPS OUT OF THE GORGE IN PURSUIT OF THE HORSE AND THE CLOUD OF DUST THROWN UP BY THE TRAILING CACTUS ...
FHEW! THOSE RED DEVILS DIDN'T SPOT THE TRICK ...
SSH!

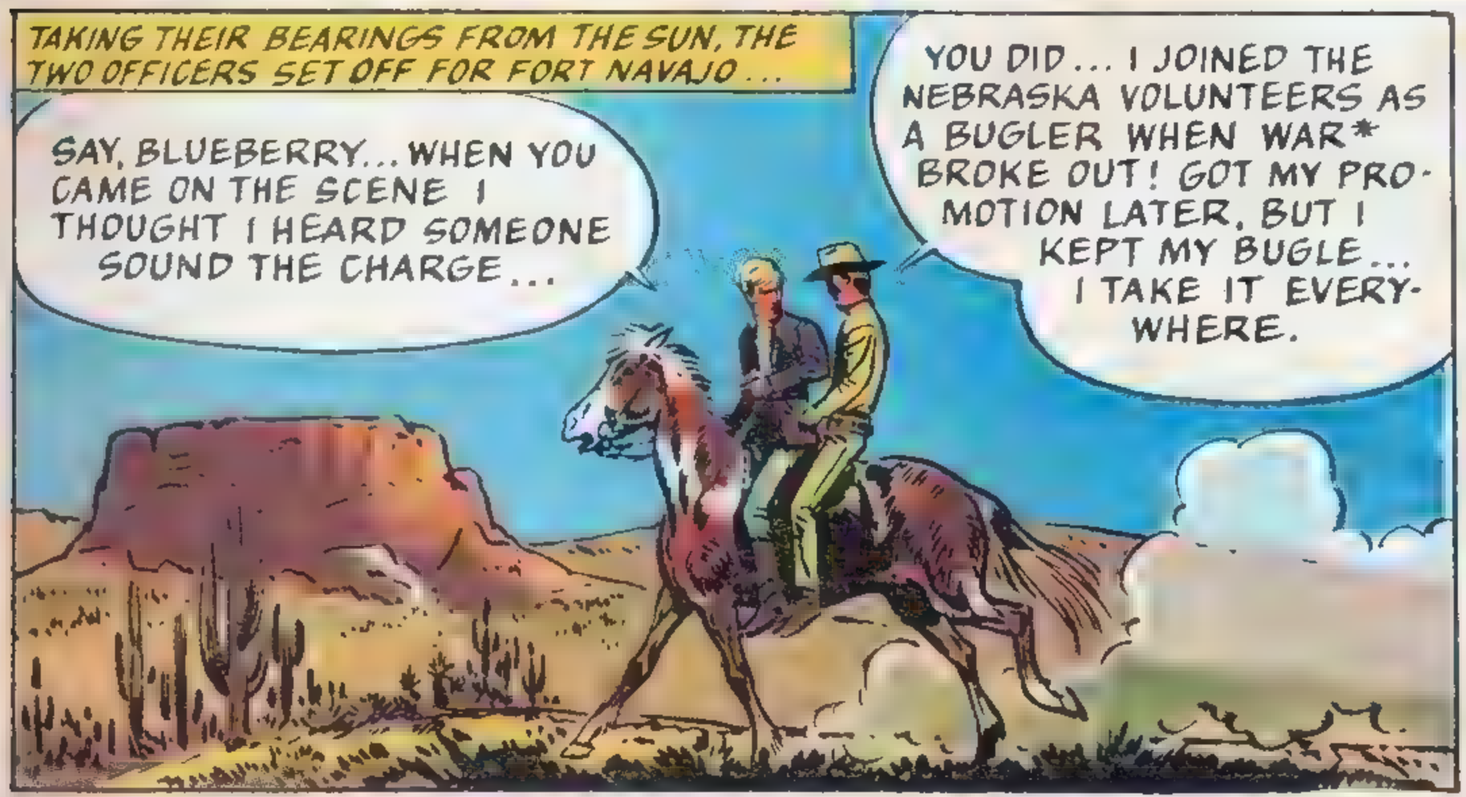

THERE THEY GO! LET'S HIT THE TRAIL!
WAIT! HORSE'S HOOVES IN THE PASS!

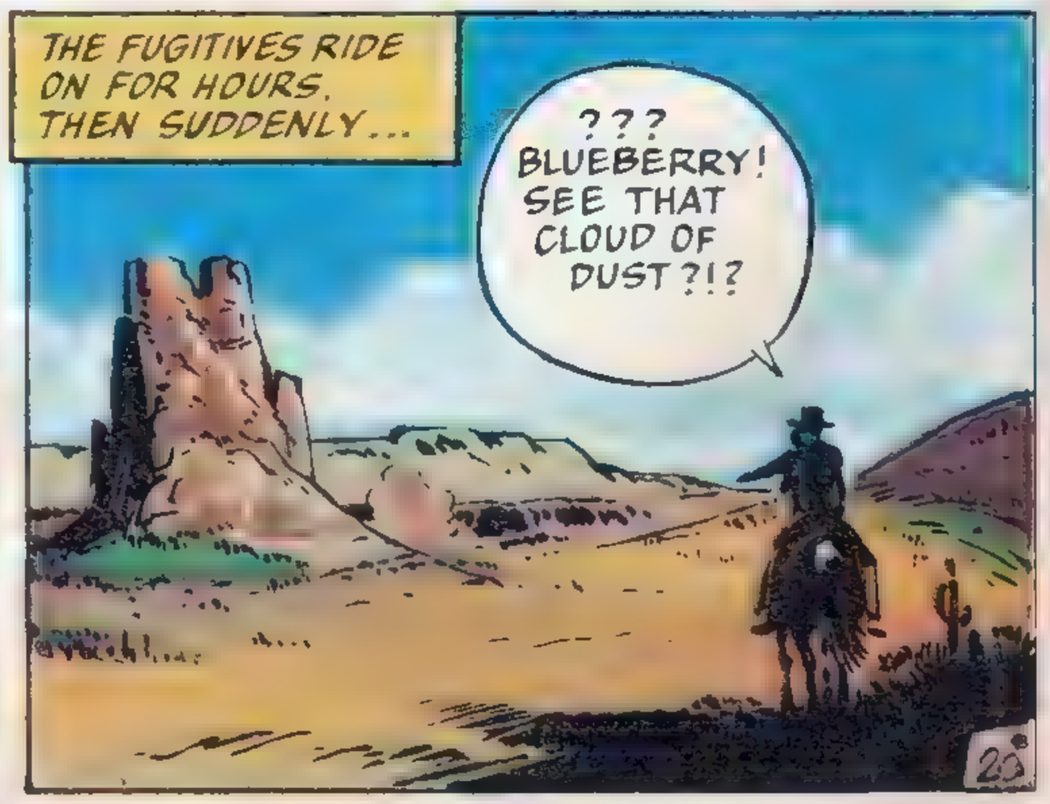

A STRAGGLER! ALONE ...
WE'RE IN LUCK! TAKE OFF YOUR JACKET AND DO AS I SAY!



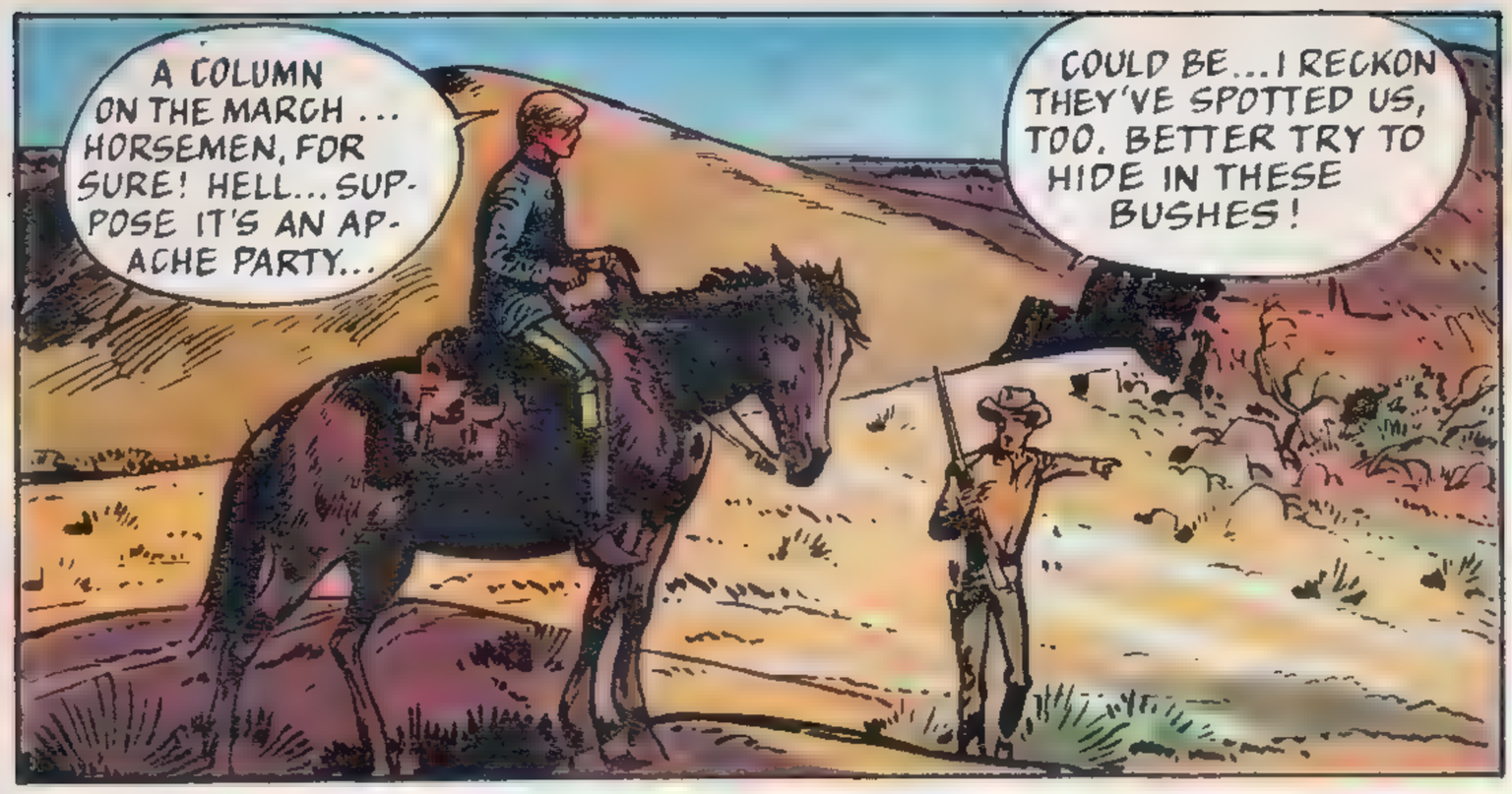


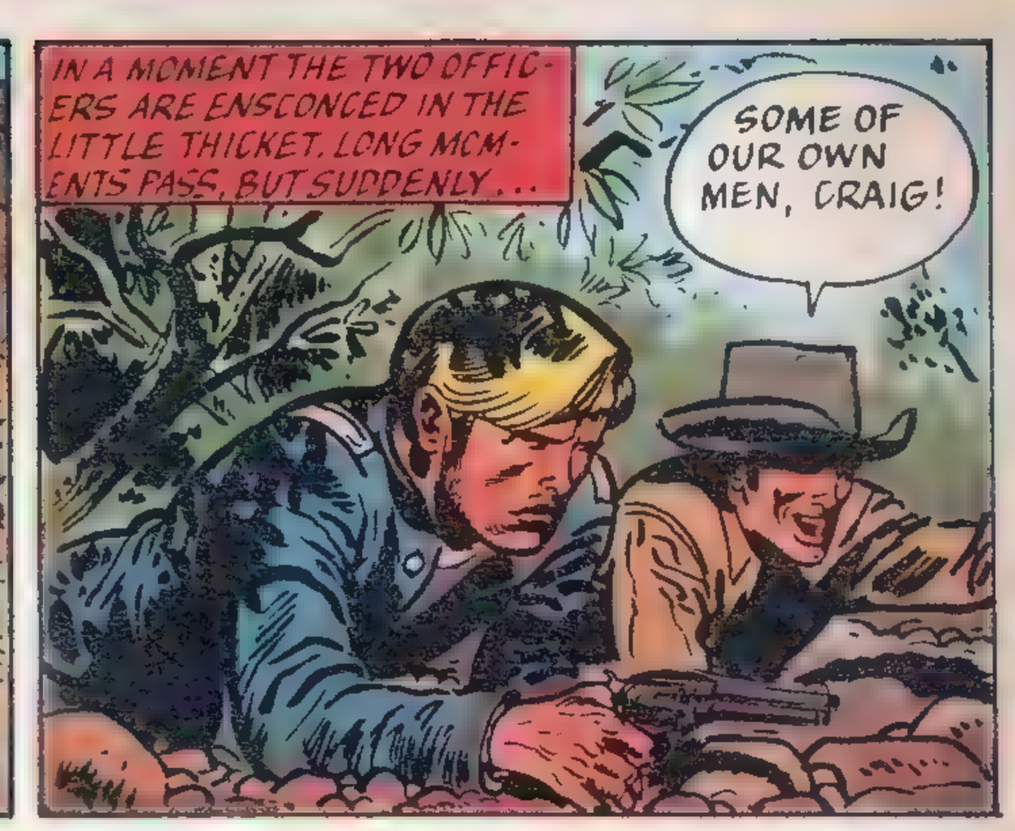


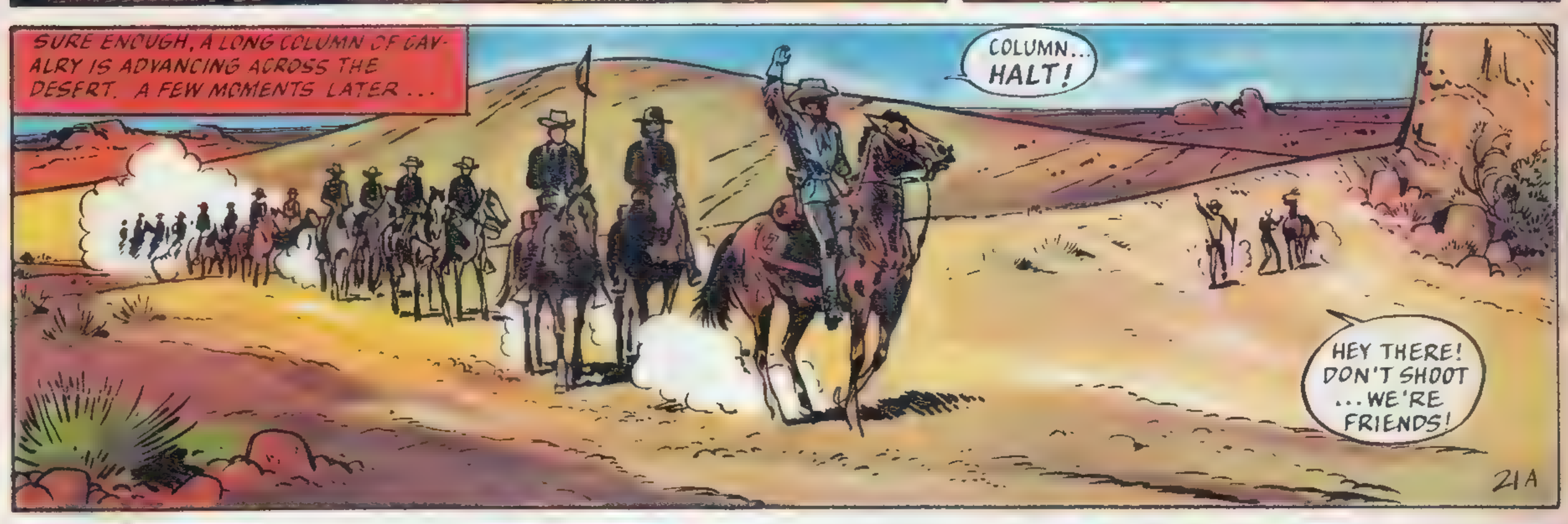


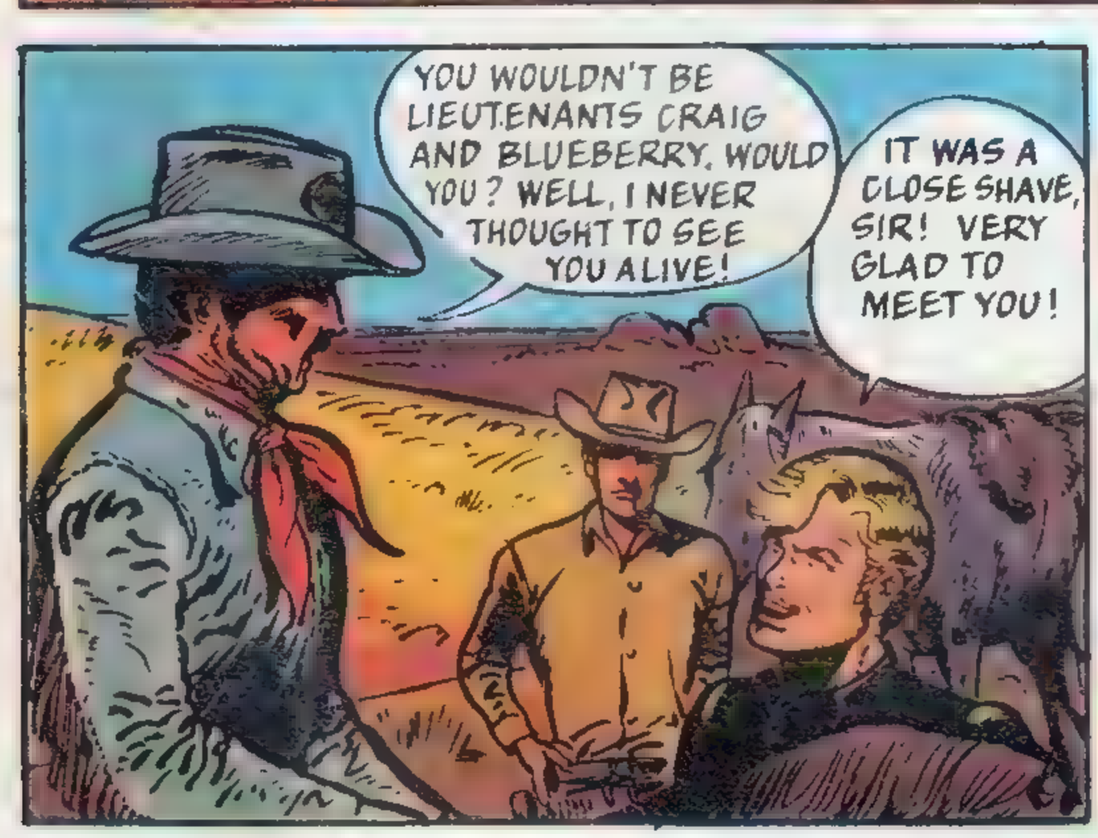


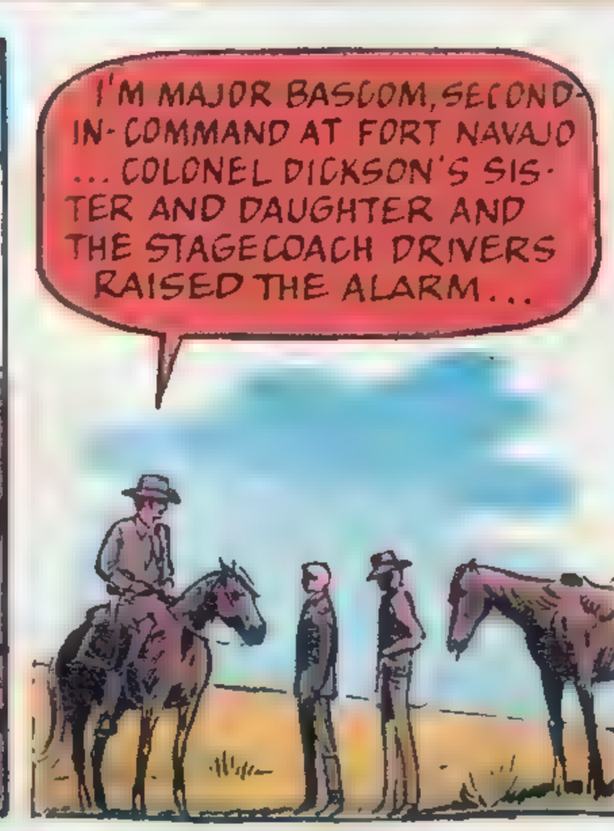
*THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR WHICH HAD JUST ENDED

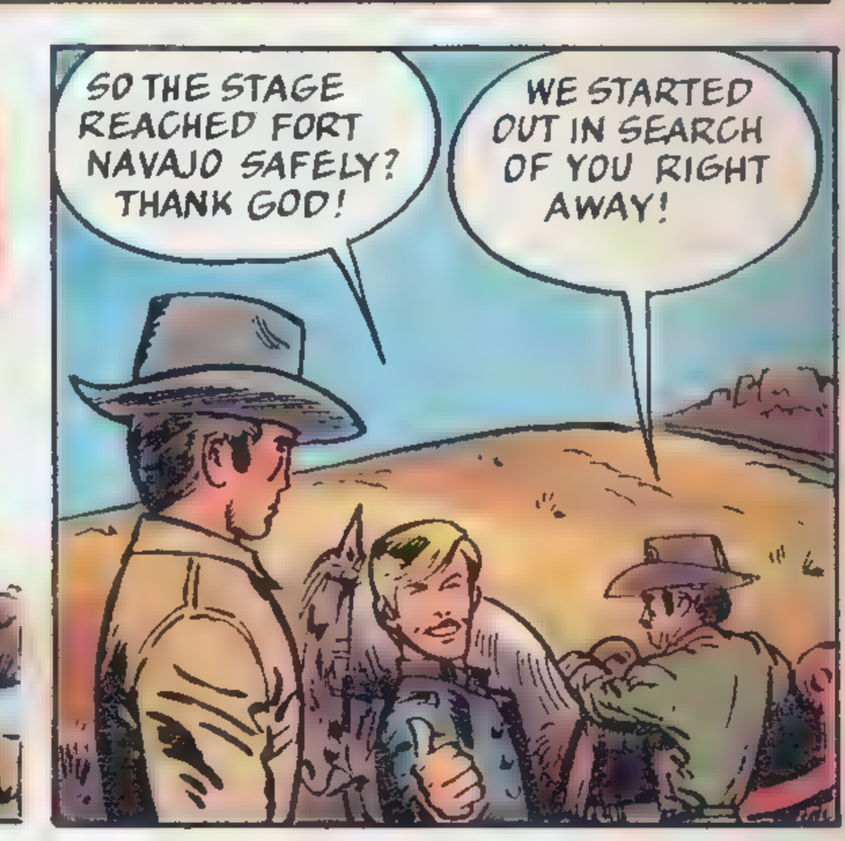

A COLUMN ON THE MARCH ... HORSEMEN, FOR SURE! HELL... SUPPOSE IT'S AN APACHE PARTY...
COULD BE...I RECKON THEY'VE SPOTTED US, TOO. BETTER TRY TO HIDE IN THESE BUSHES!

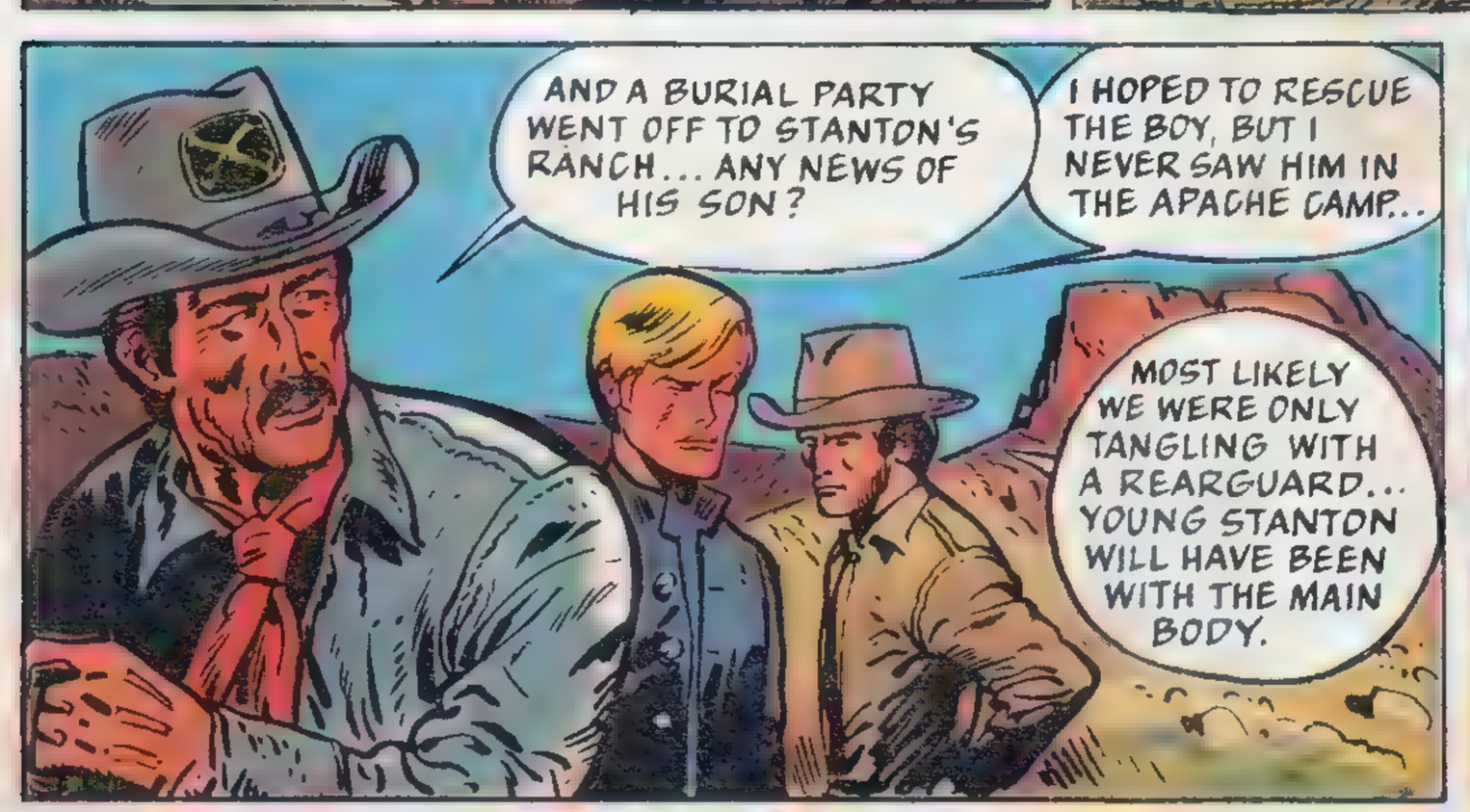

IN A MOMENT THE TWO OFFICERS ARE ENSCONCED IN THE LITTLE THICKET. LONG MOMENTS PASS, BUT SUDDENLY...
SOME OF OUR OWN MEN, CRAIG!


SURE ENOUGH, A LONG COLUMN OF CAVALRY IS ADVANCING ACROSS THE DESERT. A FEW MOMENTS LATER...
COLUMN... HALT!
HEY THERE! DON'T SHOOT ...WE'RE FRIENDS!
21A

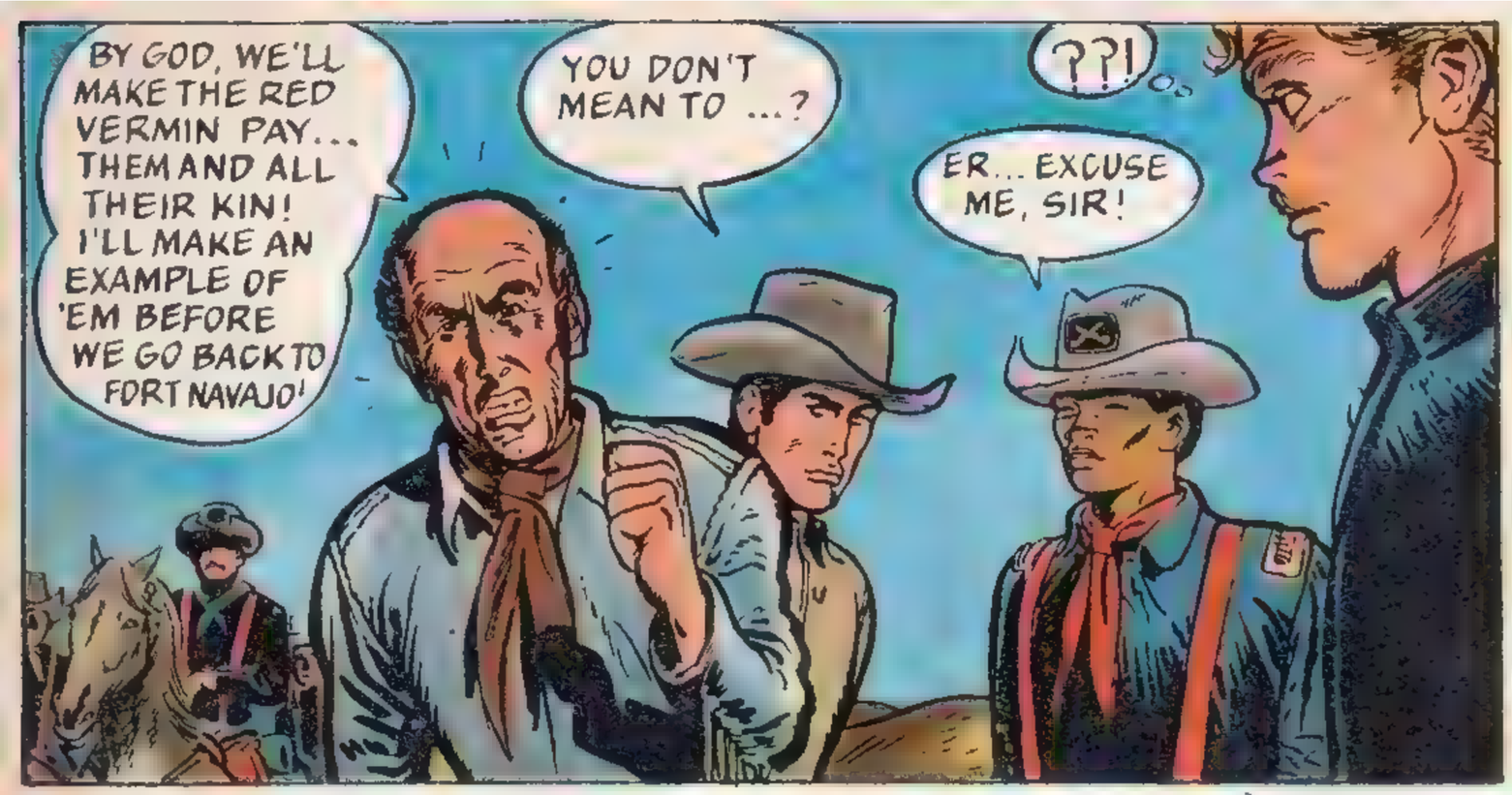

YOU WOULDN'T BE LIEUTENANTS CRAIG AND BLUEBERRY, WOULD YOU? WELL, I NEVER THOUGHT TO SEE YOU ALIVE!
IT WAS A CLOSE SHAVE, SIR! VERY GLAD TO MEET YOU!

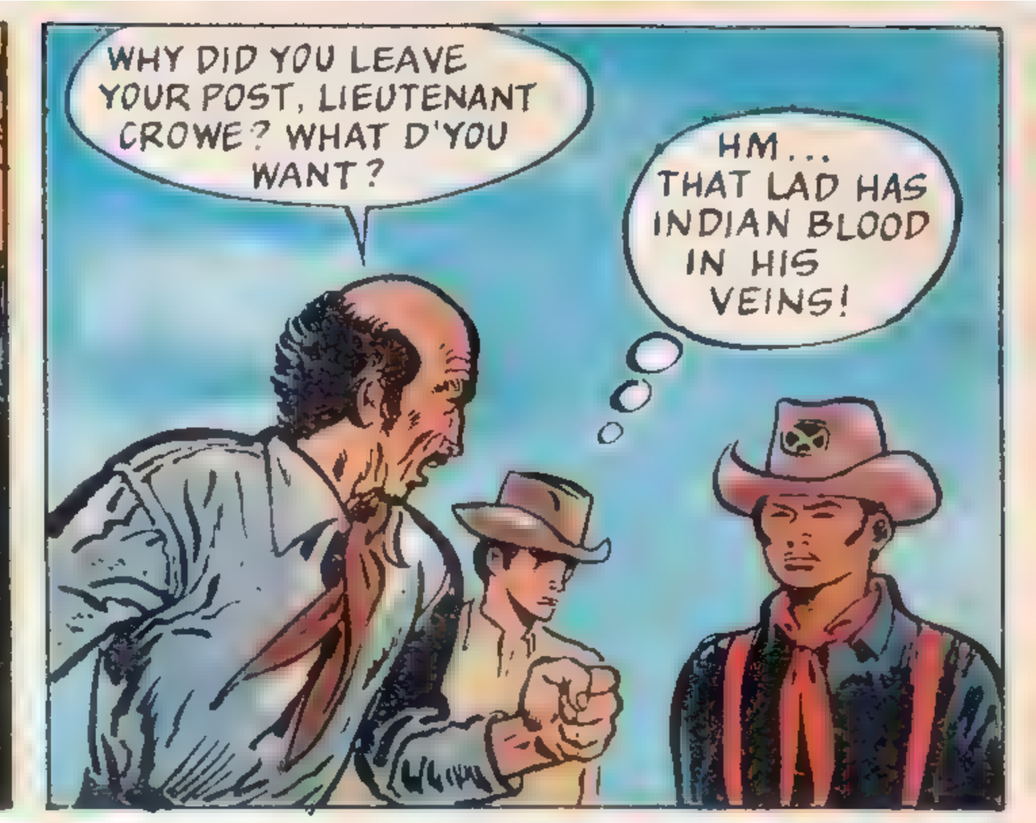

I'M MAJOR BASCOM, SECOND-IN-COMMAND AT FORT NAVAJO ... COLONEL DICKSON'S SISTER AND DAUGHTER AND THE STAGECOACH DRIVERS RAISED THE ALARM...


SO THE STAGE REACHED FORT NAVAJO SAFELY? THANK GOD!
WE STARTED OUT IN SEARCH OF YOU RIGHT AWAY!

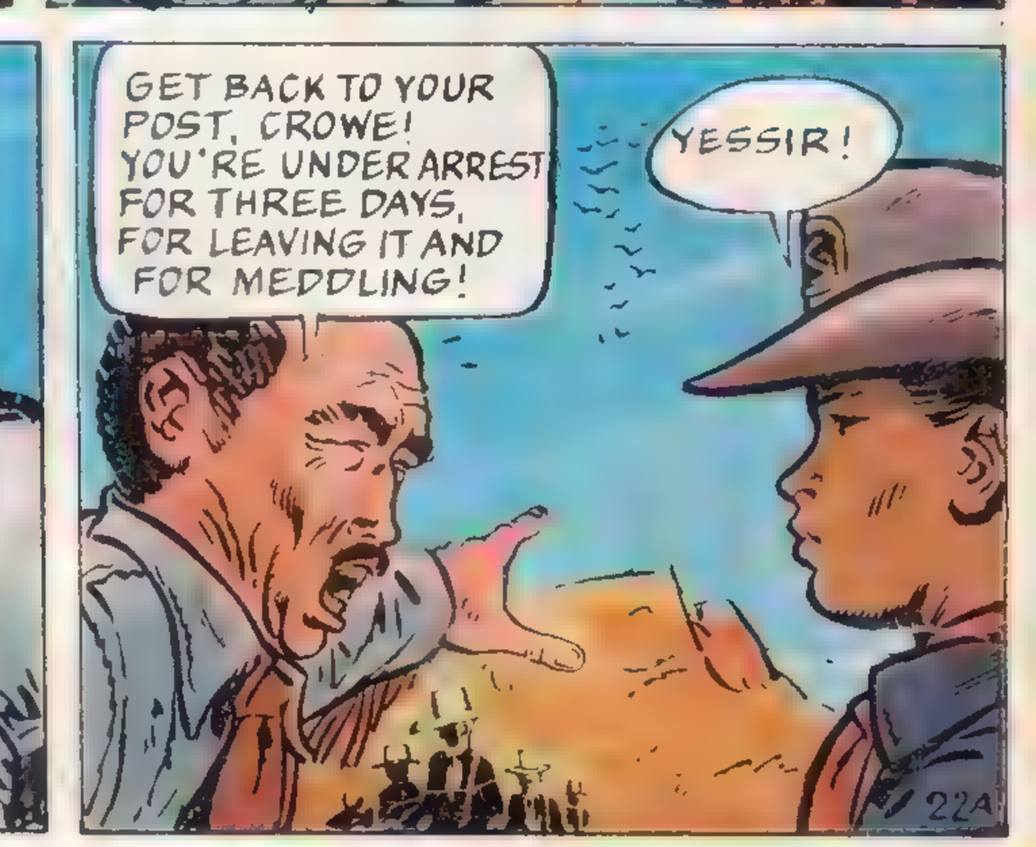

AND A BURIAL PARTY WENT OFF TO STANTON'S RANCH... ANY NEWS OF HIS SON?
I HOPED TO RESCUE THE BOY, BUT I NEVER SAW HIM IN THE APACHE CAMP...
MOST LIKELY WE WERE ONLY TANGLING WITH A REARGUARD... YOUNG STANTON WILL HAVE BEEN WITH THE MAIN BODY.

WE'LL NEVER CATCH UP WITH THEM NOW! THEY'LL HAVE GUESSED REINFORCEMENTS WERE ON THEIR WAY AND CLEARED OFF...
DAMN!
21B


BY GOD, WE'LL MAKE THE RED VERMIN PAY... THEM AND ALL THEIR KIN! I'LL MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF 'EM BEFORE WE GO BACK TO FORT NAVAJO!
YOU DON'T MEAN TO ...?
??!
ER... EXCUSE ME, SIR!


WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR POST, LIEUTENANT CROWE? WHAT D'YOU WANT?
HM... THAT LAD HAS INDIAN BLOOD IN HIS VEINS!

EXCUSE ME, SIR, BUT COLONEL DICKSON'S ORDERS WERE TO COME RIGHT BACK AFTER WE RESCUED LIEUTENANTS CRAIG AND BLUEBERRY.
YOU TEND TO YOUR OWN BUSINESS, CROWE! I'M IN CHARGE AROUND HERE!
BASCOM SEEMS TO DISLIKE THE POOR FELLOW...


GET BACK TO YOUR POST, CROWE! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST FOR THREE DAYS, FOR LEAVING IT AND FOR MEDDLING!
YESSIR!
22A

??!
??!
QUESTION MY ORDERS, WOULD HE? THAT'S WHAT COMES OF LETTING THESE HALF-BREED MONGRELS INTO THE U.S. ARMY!

YOU DON'T APPEAR TO LIKE THE HALF-BREEDS SIR...?
IT'S INJUNS I HATE... AND CROWE THERE IS THE SON OF A SQUAW AND A WHITE MAN.
HE'S FOREVER DEFENDING THOSE STINKING INJUN DOGS... BUT I'LL LEARN HIM BEFORE WE'RE THROUGH!

WELL, WE'D BETTER GET BACK TO FORT NAVAJO... SINCE THOSE ARE OUR ORDERS!
WE'LL FIND YOU MOUNTS. COLUMN... FORWARD!

SOME MINUTES LATER...
BASCOM'S A FOOL AND A BRUTE ...POOR CROWE, HE WAS LIVID WITH SUPPRESSED RAGE!
22B.

FOR HOURS ON END THE COLUMN RIDES THROUGH THE DESERT...

THERE'S ONE THING BOTHERING ME... WHY THIS SUDDEN EXPLOSION OF APACHE VIOLENCE? WE'VE BEEN AT PEACE WITH THE INDIANS FOR YEARS...

SCUM LIKE THAT WILL NEVER LIVE IN PEACE... THEY WANT WIPING OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH!

ONE OF THE INDIAN SCOUTS I SENT ON AHEAD!

LOOK!

LOOKS LIKE HE'S DISCOVERED SOMETHING...

YEAH... AND BASCOM SEEMS MIGHTY EXCITED...

WHAT'S UP, MAJOR?

WE'RE IN LUCK! OUR SCOUTS HAVE JUST FOUND A SMALL APACHE BAND ON THE MARCH, BEYOND THOSE HILLS ... THEY'LL BE A TRIBE MOVING CAMP...

RED-SKINNED SKUNKS... WELL, HERE'S OUR CHANCE TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF 'EM AND AVENGE POOR OLD STANTON!

WHAT?!

23A

THESE INDIANS ARE INNOCENT... THEY DIDN'T DO A THING! YOU SURELY DON'T MEAN TO ATTACK THEM WITHOUT WARNING?

THERE'S NO ROOM FOR FINE SENTIMENTS OUT HERE, BLUEBERRY! WE'RE ONLY GETTING IN FIRST, AND I'M IN COMMAND SO KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT!

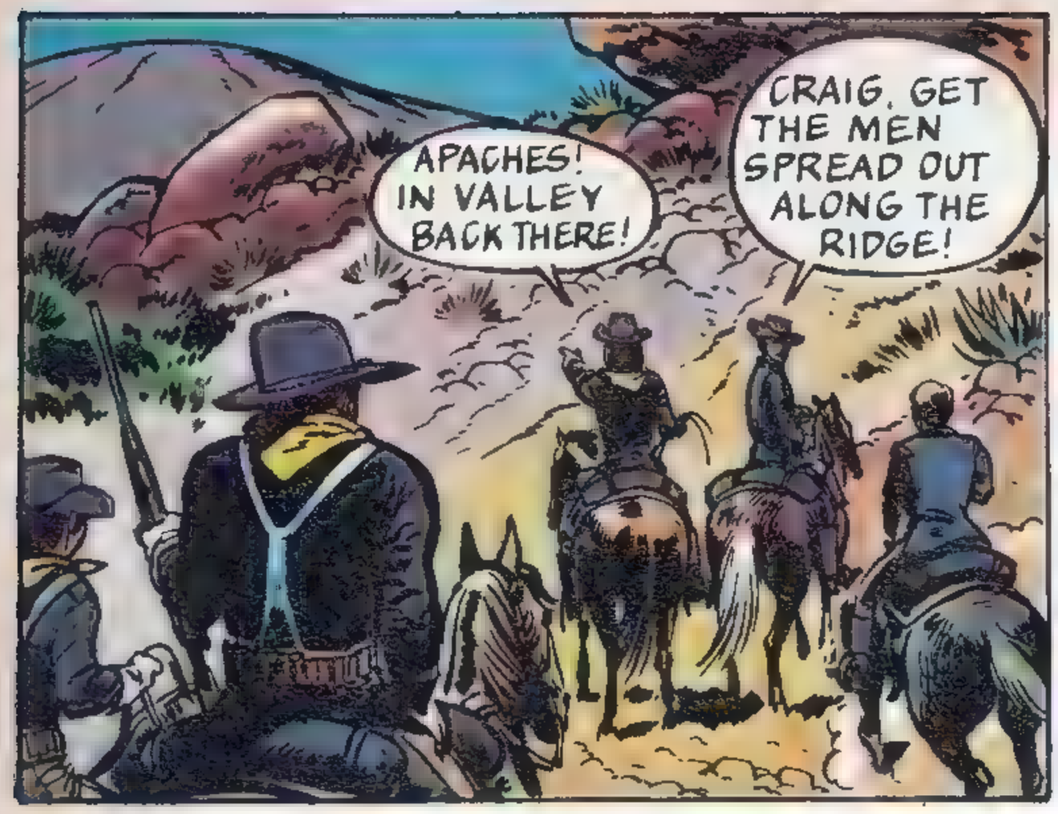
MEN! FORM UP BEHIND ME! LIEUTENANT CROWE STAYS TO GUARD THE BAGGAGE, WITH SIX MEN. FORWARD!!

GIR

THIS IS MONSTROUS! BASCOM'S HATRED OF THE INDIANS HAS DRIVEN HIM CRAZY! WE CAN'T LET IT HAPPEN!

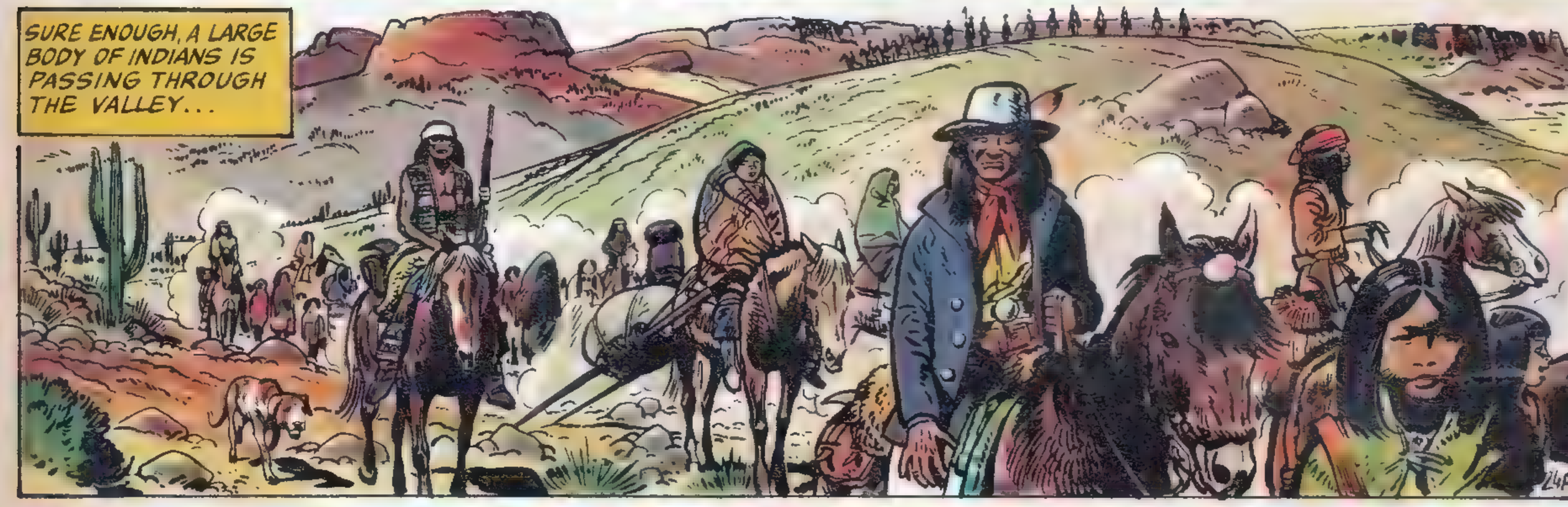
YOU KNOW SOMETHING, CRAIG? ALL THIS CHIVALRY WILL BE THE DEATH OF YOU ...WELL, CAN'T SAY I FANCY THIS MUCH MYSELF...

23B


APACHES! IN VALLEY BACK THERE!
CRAIG, GET THE MEN SPREAD OUT ALONG THE RIDGE!

FOR GOD'S SAKE, SIR! DON'T...
DO AS I SAY AND NEVER MIND GOD, LIEUTENANT!

THERE!
HA! GOT 'EM... DAMN RED-SKINS!


SURE ENOUGH, A LARGE BODY OF INDIANS IS PASSING THROUGH THE VALLEY...

SUDDENLY
UGH! LET CHIEF GREY WOLF LOOK! BLUECOATS!
HAVE NO FEAR ...THE APACHES AND THE SOLDIERS ARE AT PEACE!

READY, MEN? CHARGE...AND NO QUARTER! REMEMBER THE STANTONS!

WHY, THE BLUECOATS... THE BLUECOATS ARE ATTACKING!

THE APACHES ARE TAKEN BY SURPRISE. WARRIORS MILL A-ROUND IN CONFUSION ON THEIR PONIES, TRYING TO REGROUP AND COVER THE PANIC-STRICKEN FLIGHT OF THE SQUAWS AND CHILDREN AS A HAIL OF BULLETS STRIKES SEVERAL INDIANS DOWN ...

TREACHERY TREACH... OH!

WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING, BLUEBERRY! WE CAN'T LET THEM SLAUGHTER DEFENSE-LESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN!

YOU'RE RIGHT THERE, CRAIG... I GUESS I MAY BE SORRY FOR IT, BUT THIS IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN GIVE THEM A LITTLE TIME...

25A

HE'S... WHY HE'S SOUNDING THE RE-TREAT!

I GET THE IDEA... I MUST HELP HIM OUT!

STOP! DON'T YOU HEAR THE RETREAT? FALL BACK! FALL BACK!

THE CAVALRYMEN RIDING FULL TILT AHEAD ARE NOT SURE EXACTLY WHAT IS GOING ON, BUT TRAINED AS THEY ARE TO OBEY A BUGLE CALL, THEY REIN IN THEIR HORSES, AND THE CHARGE STOPS DEAD. THE APACHE SURVIVORS HALF-CRAZED WITH TERROR, ESCAPE.

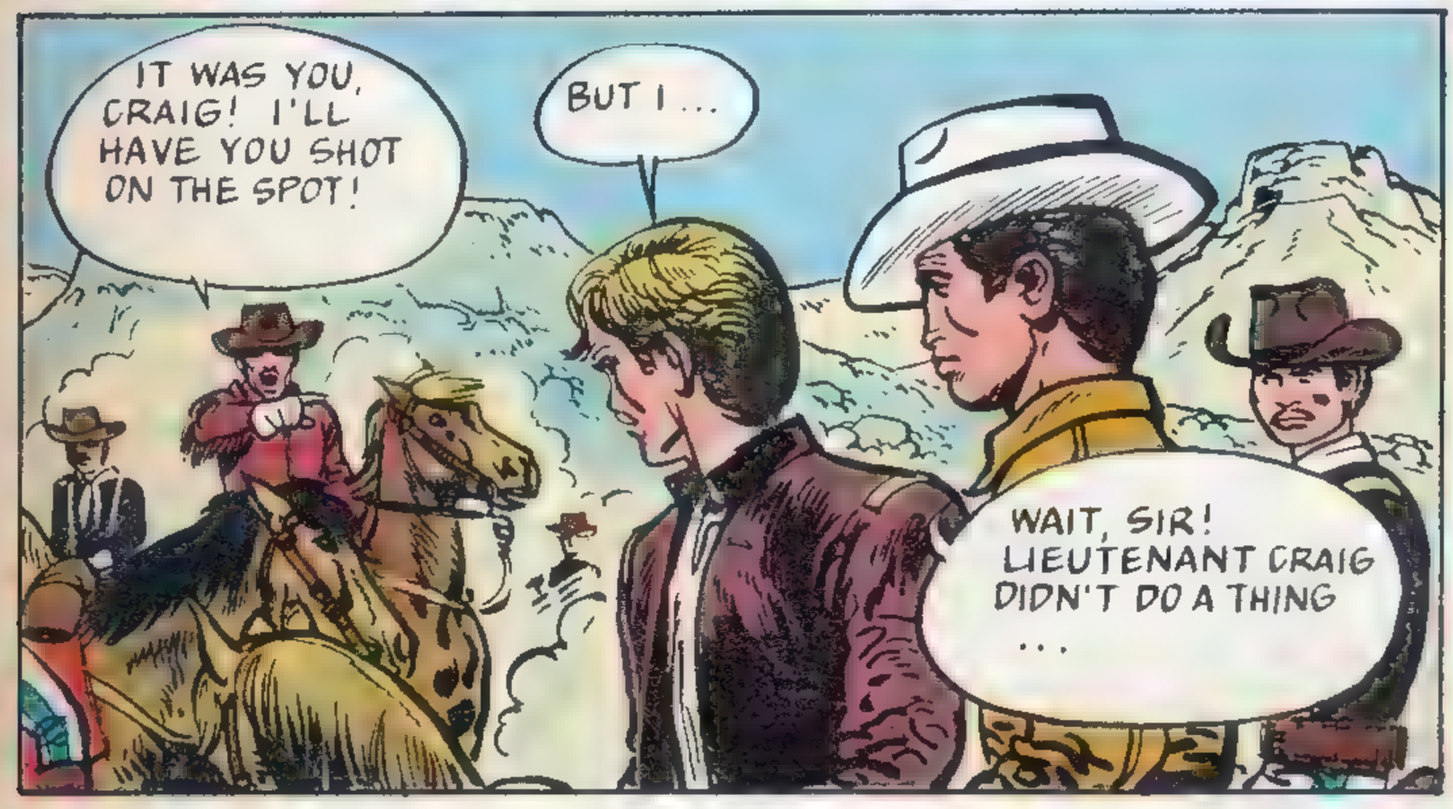
ABOUT TURN... RETREAT!

TANTAN TARA

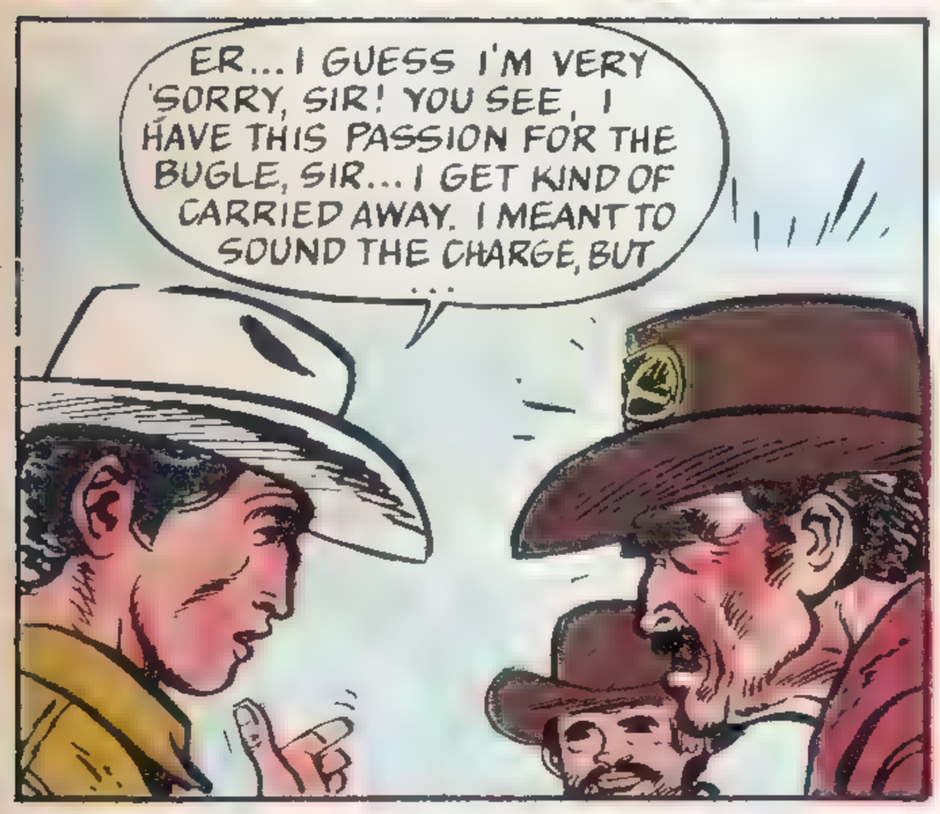
25B

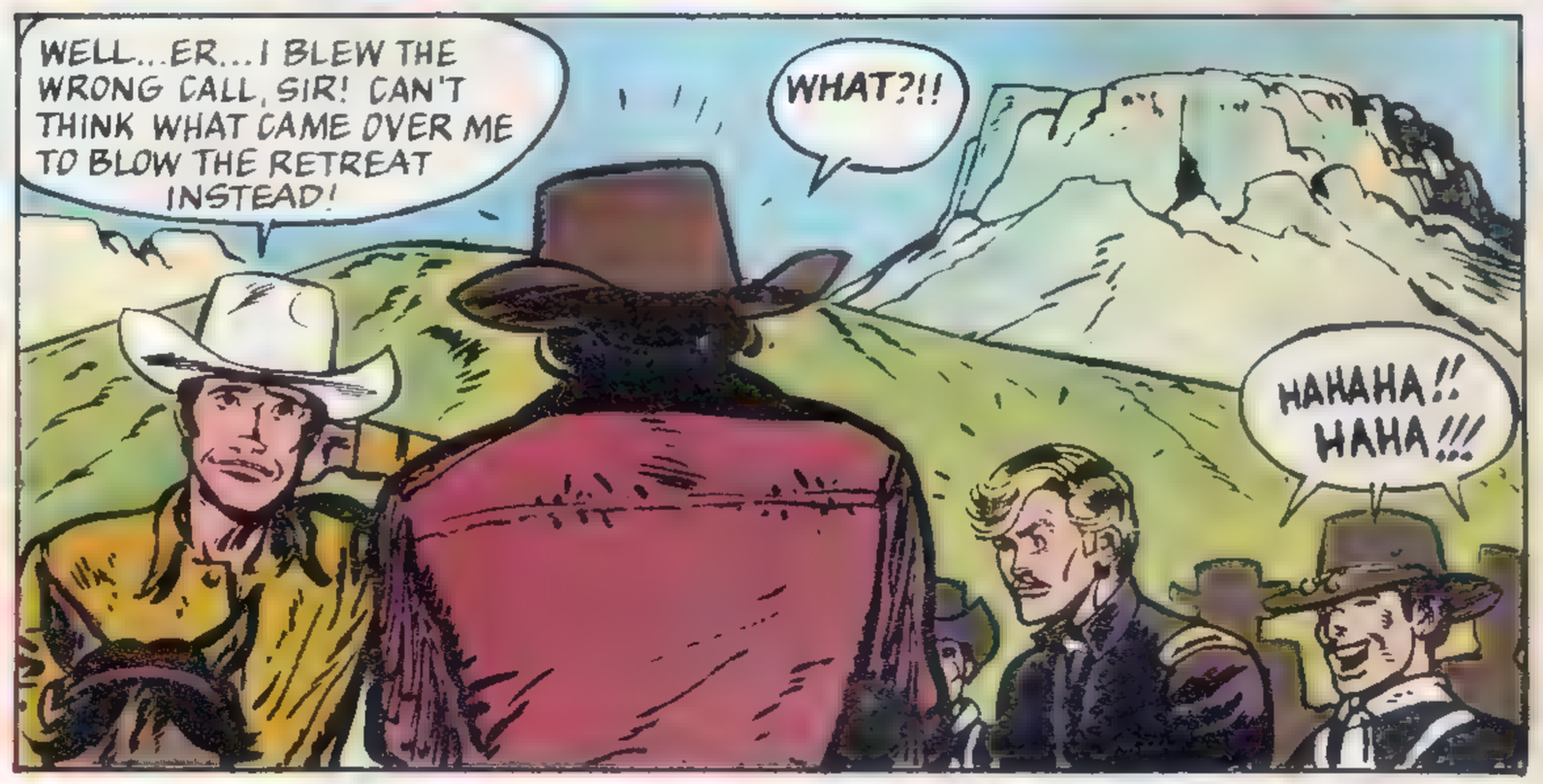
RETREAT! RETREAT!
ADVANCE! ADVANCE, YOU DOGS! WHO GAVE THE ORDER TO HALT?

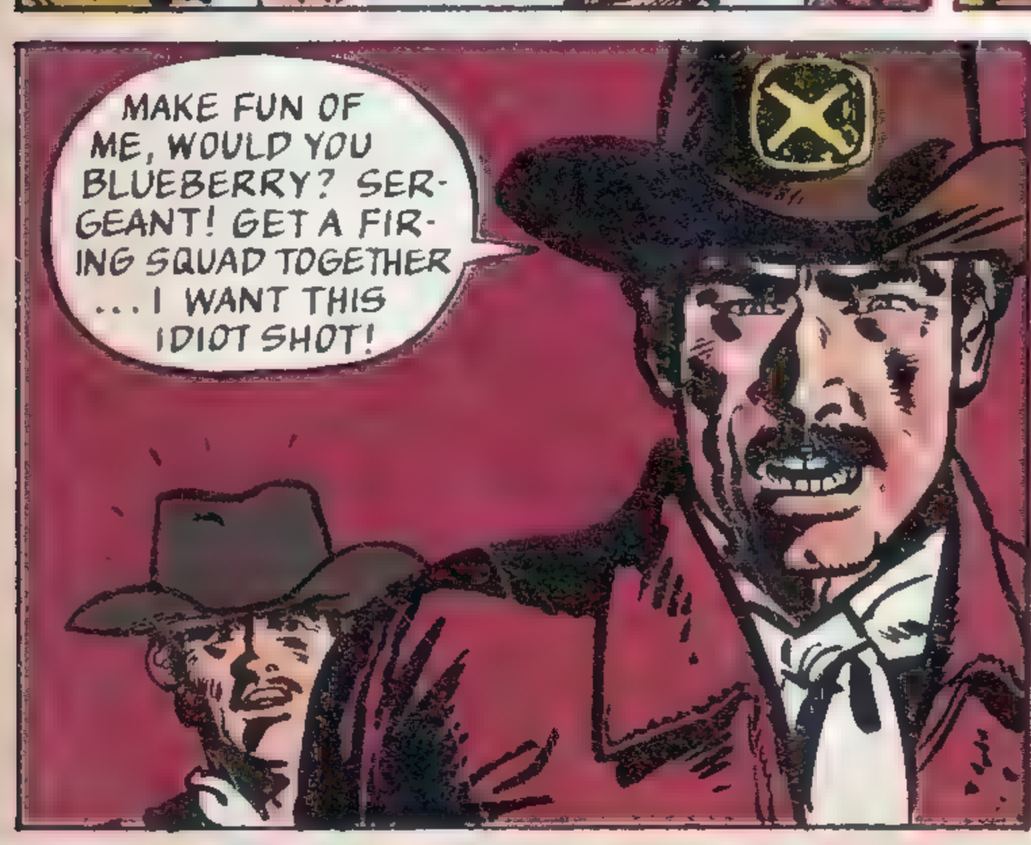
FOR LONG SECONDS TORN BETWEEN THE SOUND OF THE BUGLE AND BASCOM'S CONTRADICTORY ORDERS, THE LINE OF MEN WAVERS IN CONFUSION...
HELL AND DAMNATION ...WHO DARED ORDER THE RETREAT?


IT WAS YOU, CRAIG! I'LL HAVE YOU SHOT ON THE SPOT!
BUT I...
WAIT, SIR! LIEUTENANT CRAIG DIDN'T DO A THING ...

...EXCEPT OBEY THE BUGLE CALL...SIR! AND... ER... I BLEW THE BUGLE, SIR!
WHAT?
26A

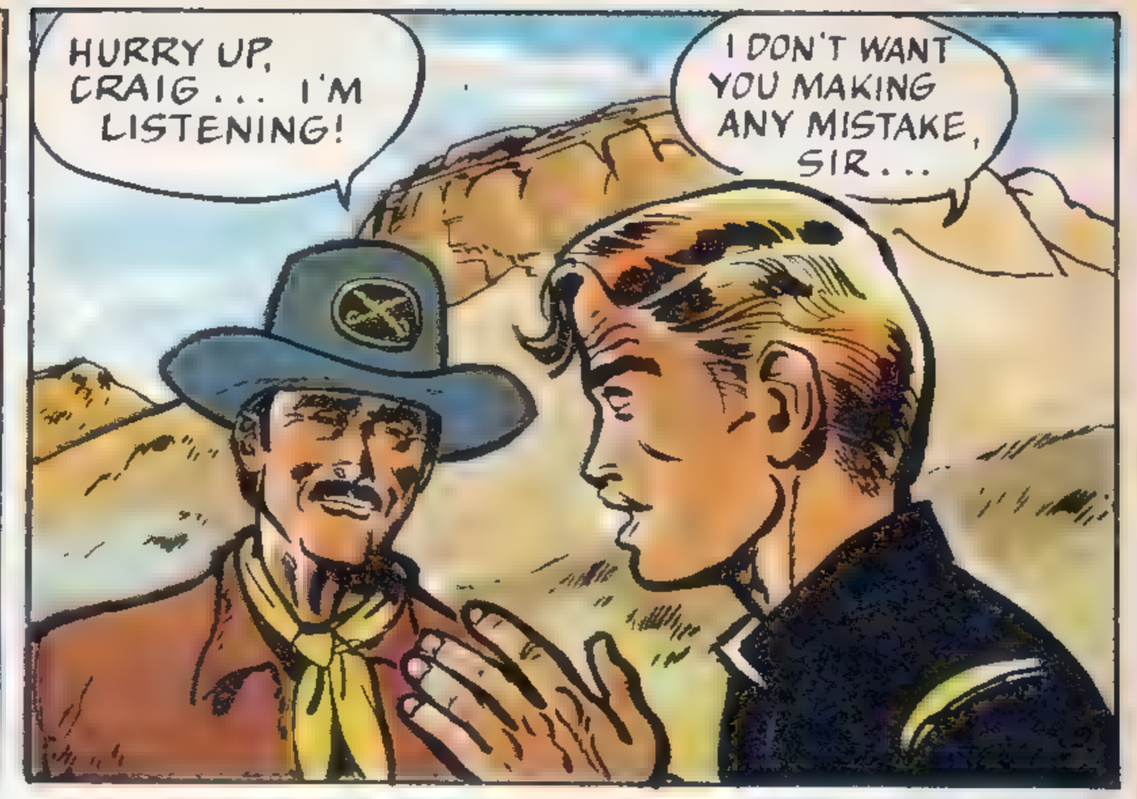

ER...I GUESS I'M VERY SORRY, SIR! YOU SEE, I HAVE THIS PASSION FOR THE BUGLE, SIR...I GET KIND OF CARRIED AWAY. I MEANT TO SOUND THE CHARGE, BUT ...

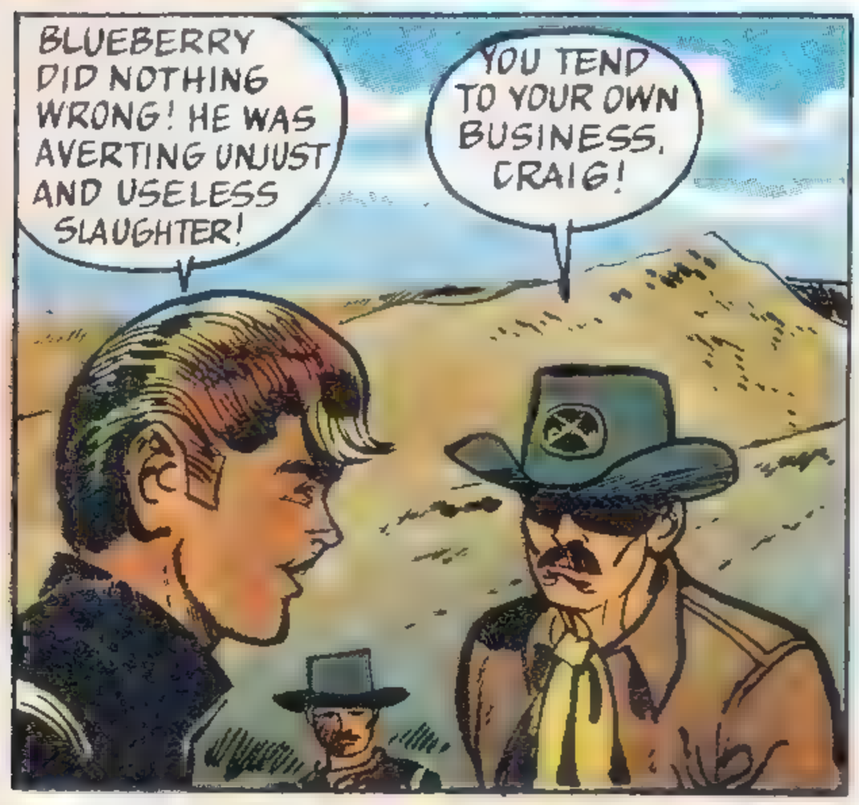

WELL...ER...I BLEW THE WRONG CALL, SIR! CAN'T THINK WHAT CAME OVER ME TO BLOW THE RETREAT INSTEAD!
WHAT?!!
HAHAHA!! HAHA!!!

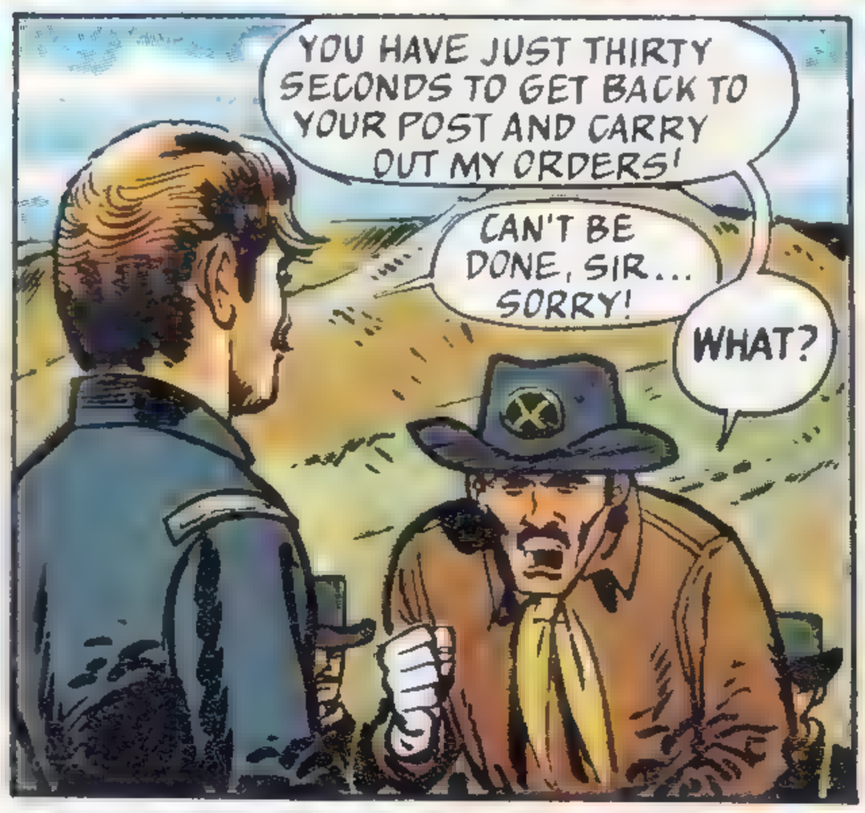

MAKE FUN OF ME, WOULD YOU BLUEBERRY? SERGEANT! GET A FIRING SQUAD TOGETHER ...I WANT THIS IDIOT SHOT!

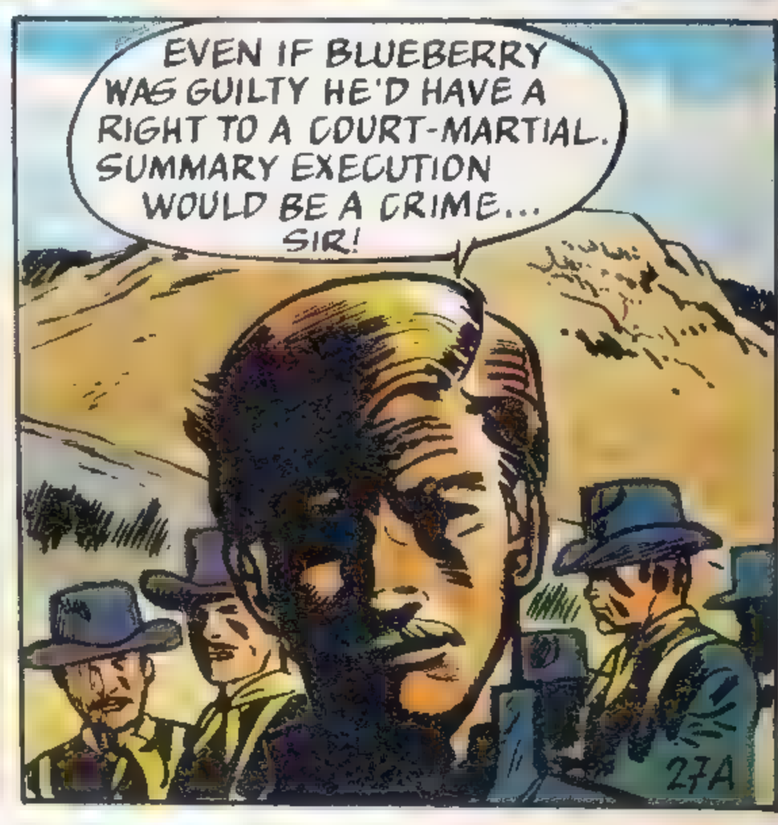
BUT IT WAS A MISTAKE, SIR WHY WOULD YOU...
FOR TREACHERY, THAT'S WHY!
THANKS TO YOU, THOSE RED SKUNKS GOT AWAY JUST AS WE WERE ABOUT TO CRUSH 'EM... WE'LL NEVER FIND THEM NOW...
26B

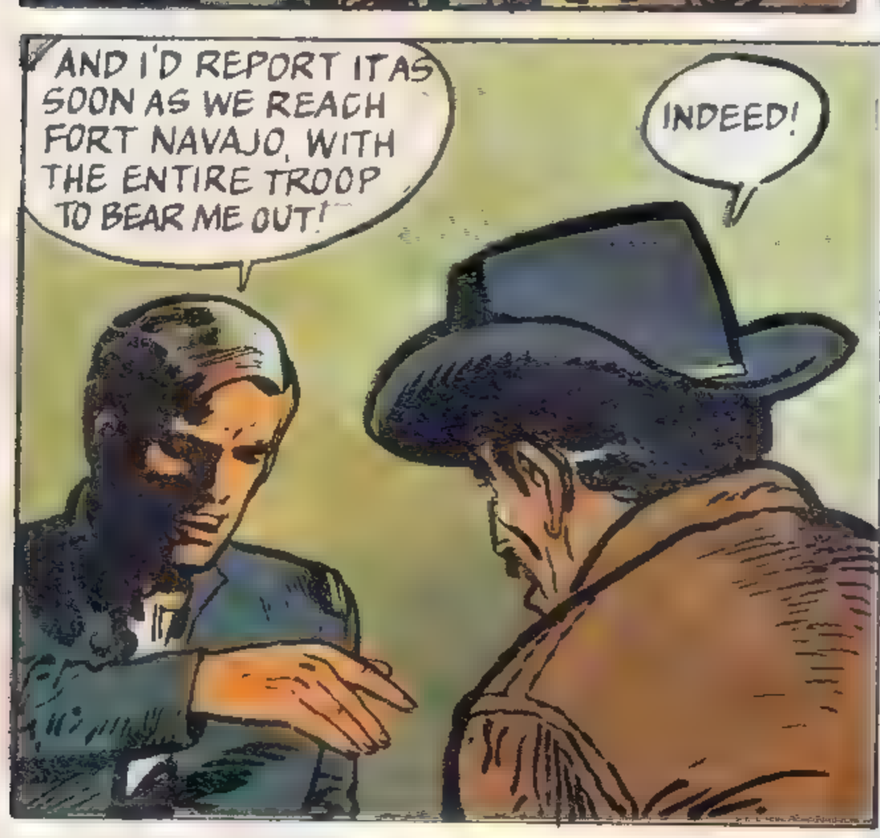
SO LET'S GET ON WITH IT... LIEUTENANT CRAIG, I PUT YOU IN CHARGE OF BLUEBERRY'S EXECUTION!
ONE MOMENT, SIR! A WORD IN YOUR EAR... IT'S IMPORTANT.

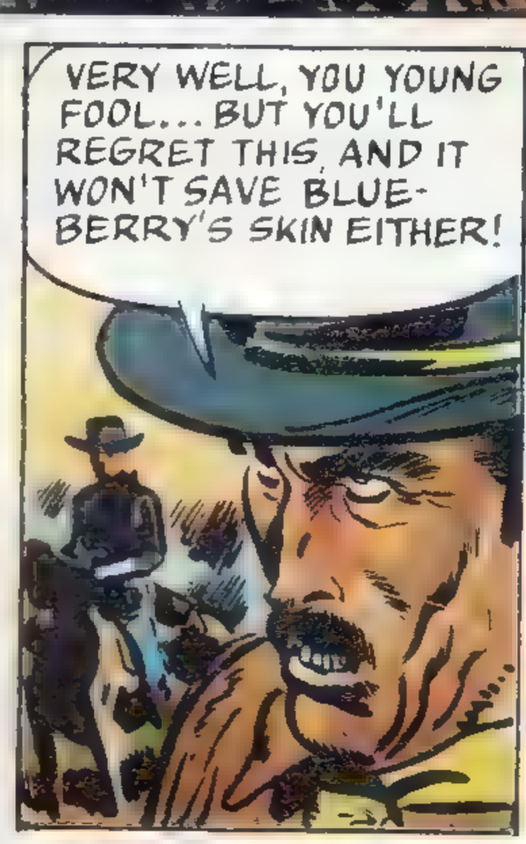

HURRY UP, CRAIG... I'M LISTENING!
I DON'T WANT YOU MAKING ANY MISTAKE, SIR...


BLUEBERRY DID NOTHING WRONG! HE WAS AVERTING UNJUST AND USELESS SLAUGHTER!
YOU TEND TO YOUR OWN BUSINESS, CRAIG!

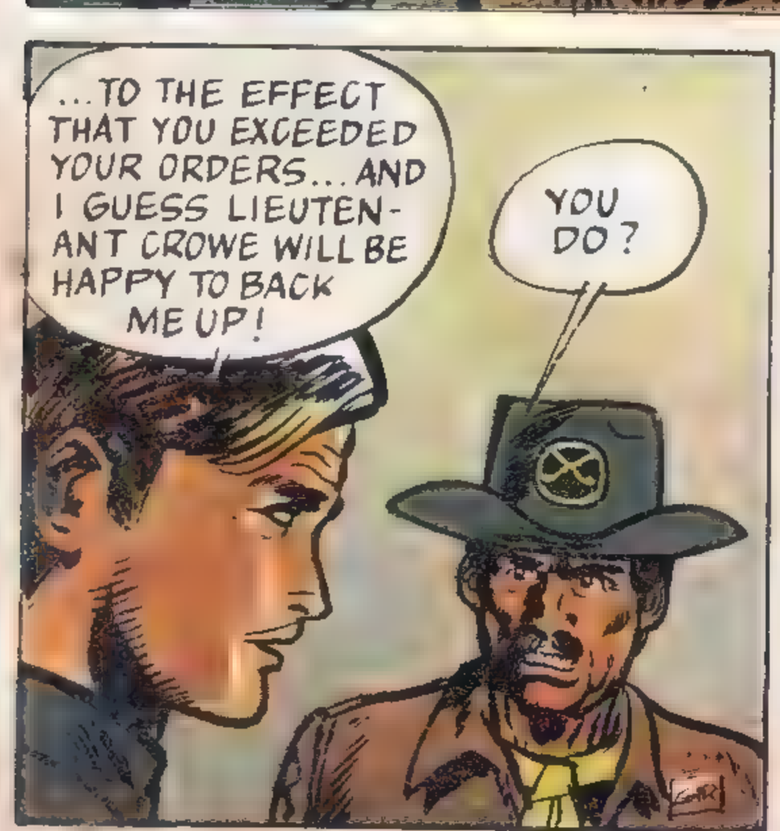

YOU HAVE JUST THIRTY SECONDS TO GET BACK TO YOUR POST AND CARRY OUT MY ORDERS!
CAN'T BE DONE, SIR... SORRY!
WHAT?


EVEN IF BLUEBERRY WAS GUILTY HE'D HAVE A RIGHT TO A COURT-MARTIAL. SUMMARY EXECUTION WOULD BE A CRIME... SIR!
27A

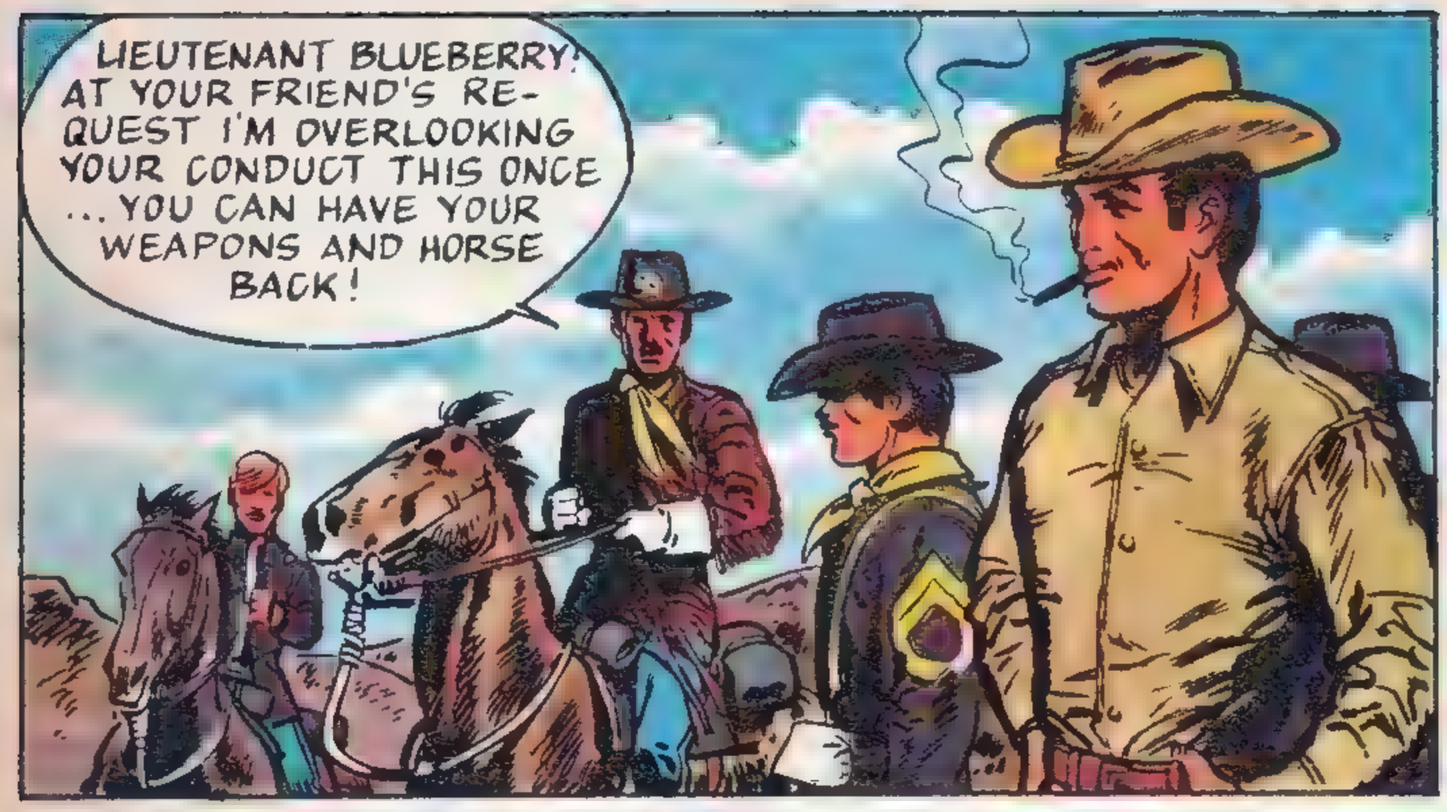

AND I'D REPORT IT AS SOON AS WE REACH FORT NAVAJO, WITH THE ENTIRE TROOP TO BEAR ME OUT!
INDEED!


VERY WELL, YOU YOUNG FOOL... BUT YOU'LL REGRET THIS, AND IT WON'T SAVE BLUEBERRY'S SKIN EITHER!

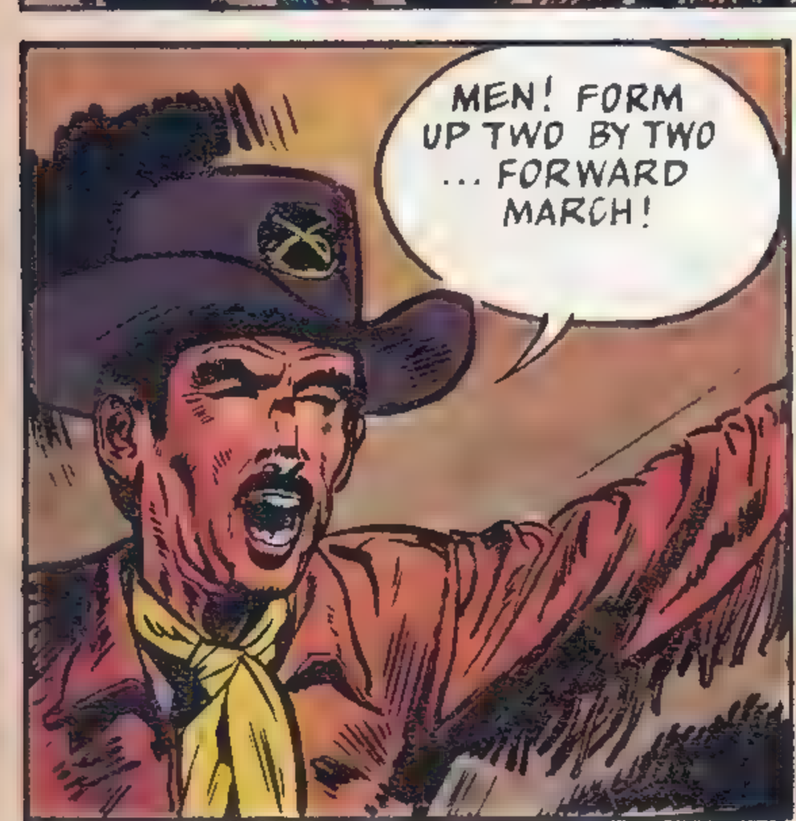
MAYBE NOT SIR... BUT I WARN YOU I'D TESTIFY AGAINST YOU...
YOUNG BLACK-GUARD!

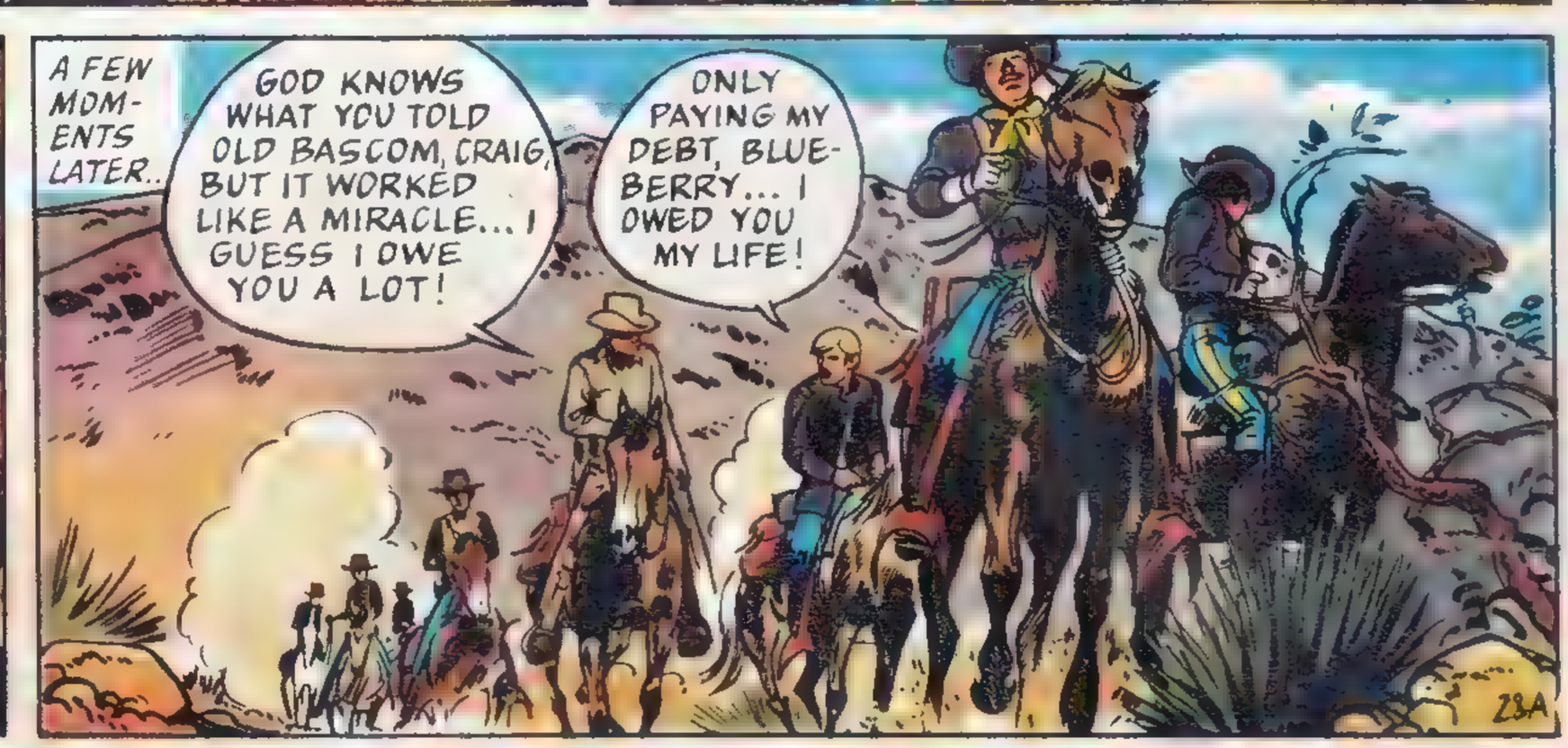

...TO THE EFFECT THAT YOU EXCEEDED YOUR ORDERS... AND I GUESS LIEUTENANT CROWE WILL BE HAPPY TO BACK ME UP!
YOU DO?

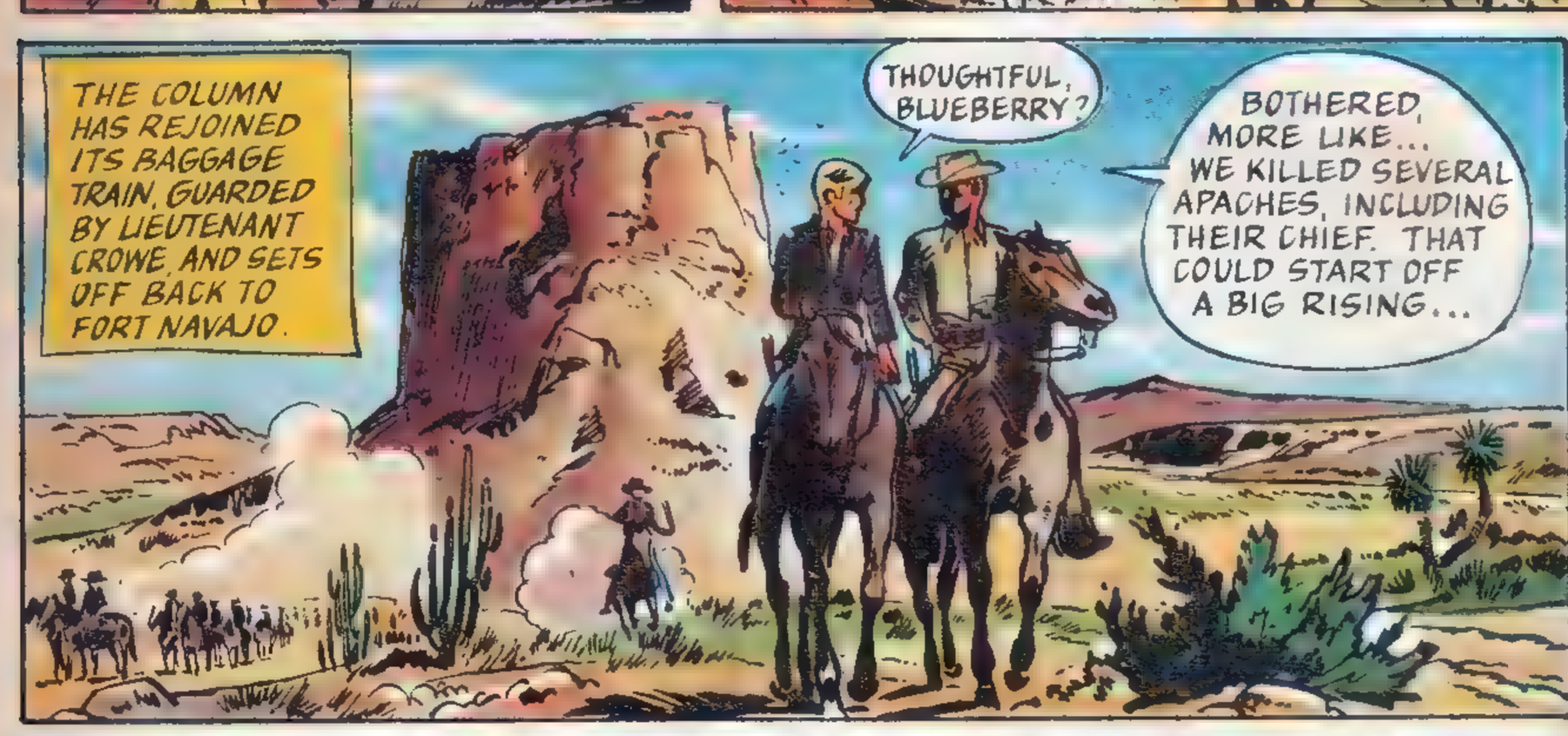
I'LL MOVE HEAVEN AND EARTH FOR LIEUTENANT BLUEBERRY... MY FATHER, GENERAL CRAIG, HAS FRIENDS IN WASHINGTON! THAT'S ALL, SIR!
VERY WELL, CRAIG. YOU WIN THE FIRST ROUND ...BUT YOU'LL BE SORRY!
27B


LIEUTENANT BLUEBERRY! AT YOUR FRIEND'S REQUEST I'M OVERLOOKING YOUR CONDUCT THIS ONCE ... YOU CAN HAVE YOUR WEAPONS AND HORSE BACK!

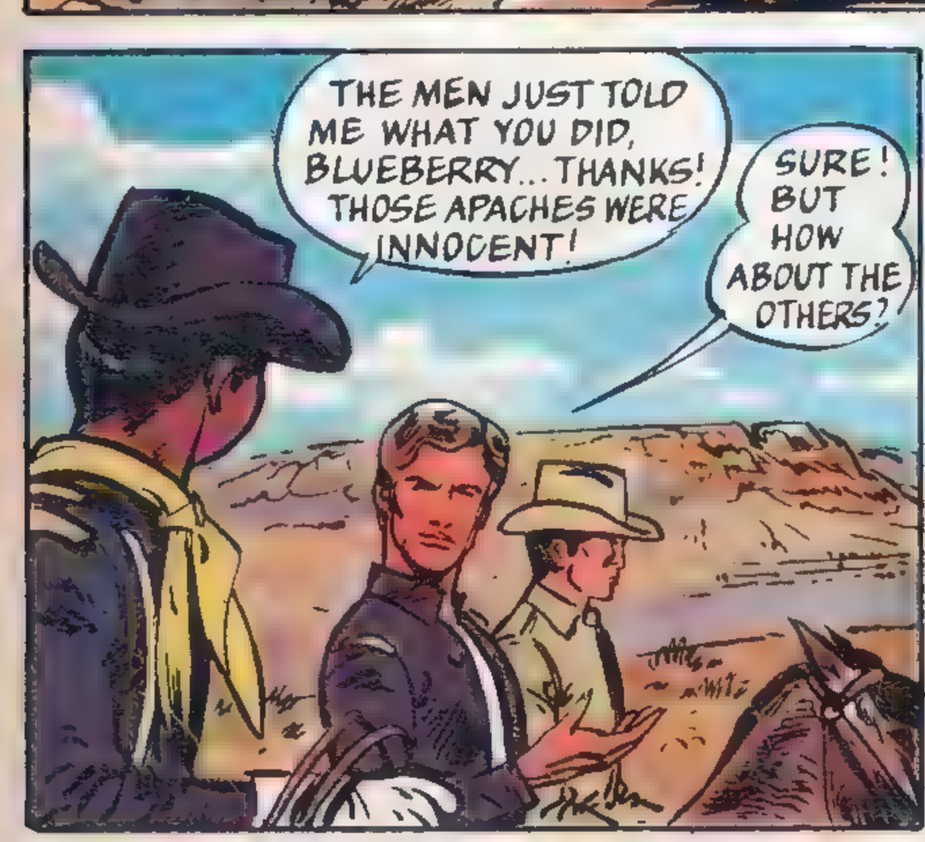
BUT ONCE WE'RE BACK AT FORT NAVAJO, YOU'RE UNDER STRICT ARREST FOR TWENTY DAYS...THAT'LL CURE YOU OF BUGLE BLOWING!
YES, SIR!

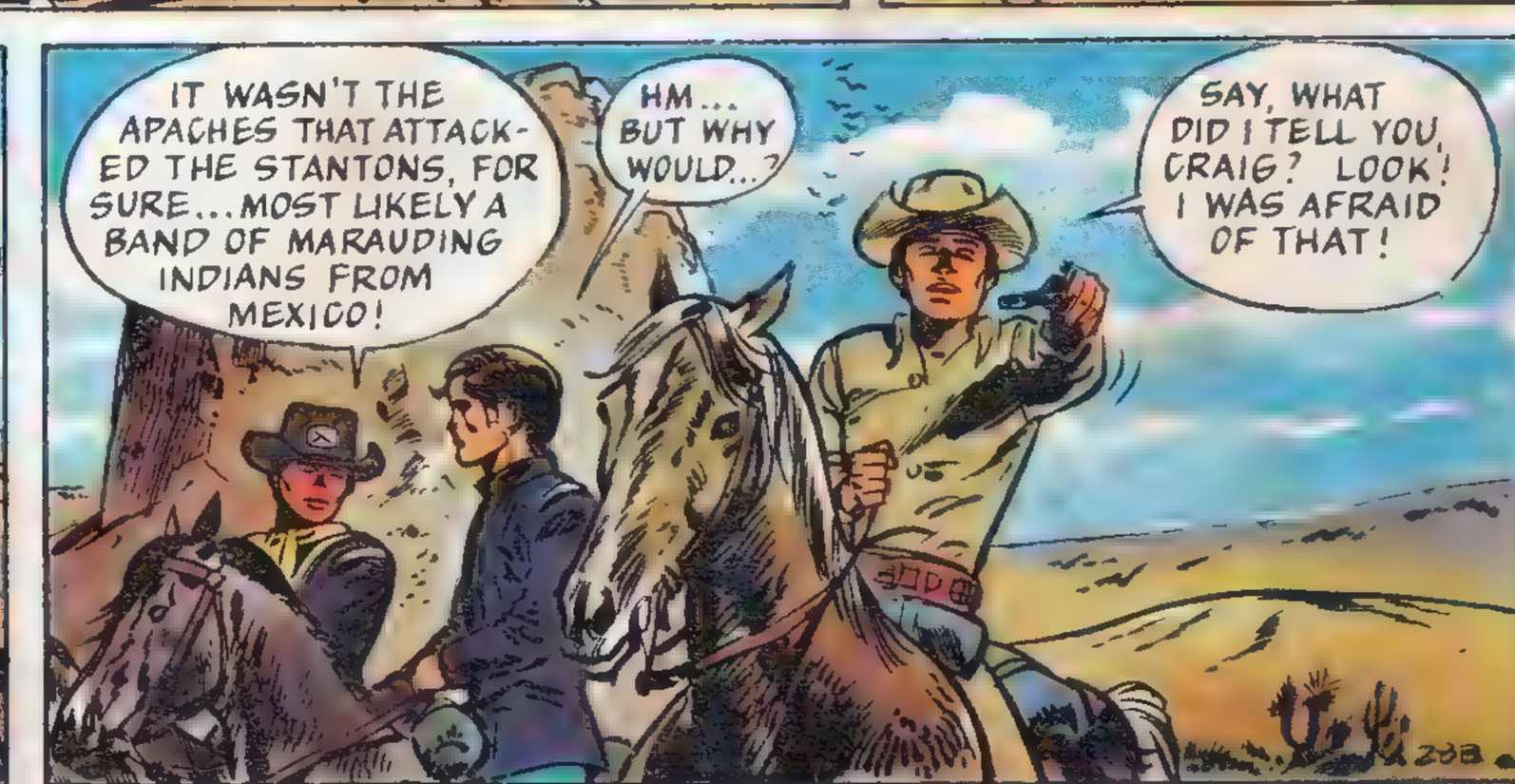

MEN! FORM UP TWO BY TWO ... FORWARD MARCH!

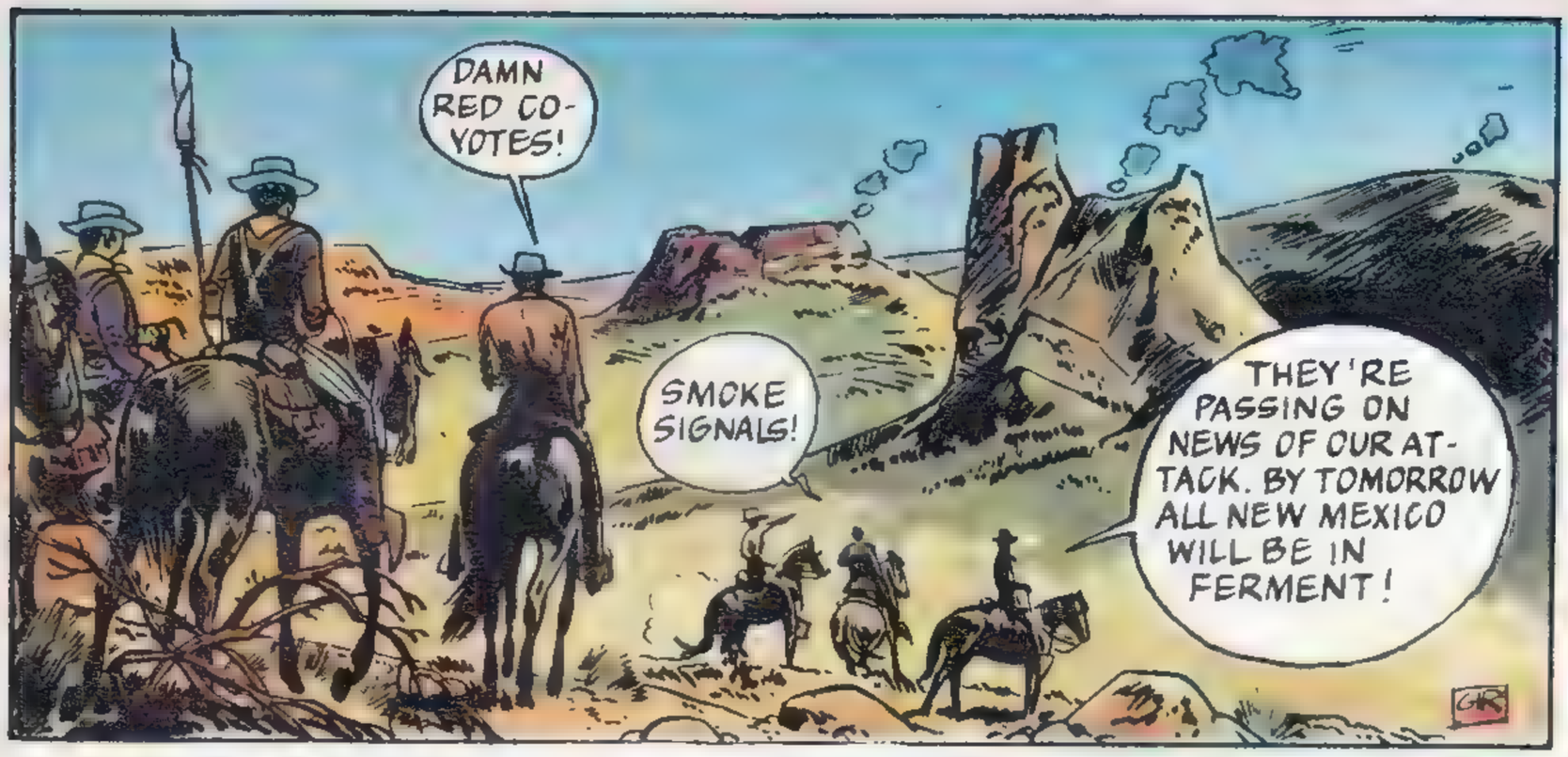

A FEW MOMENTS LATER..
GOD KNOWS WHAT YOU TOLD OLD BASCOM, CRAIG, BUT IT WORKED LIKE A MIRACLE... I GUESS I OWE YOU A LOT!
ONLY PAYING MY DEBT, BLUEBERRY... I OWED YOU MY LIFE!
23A

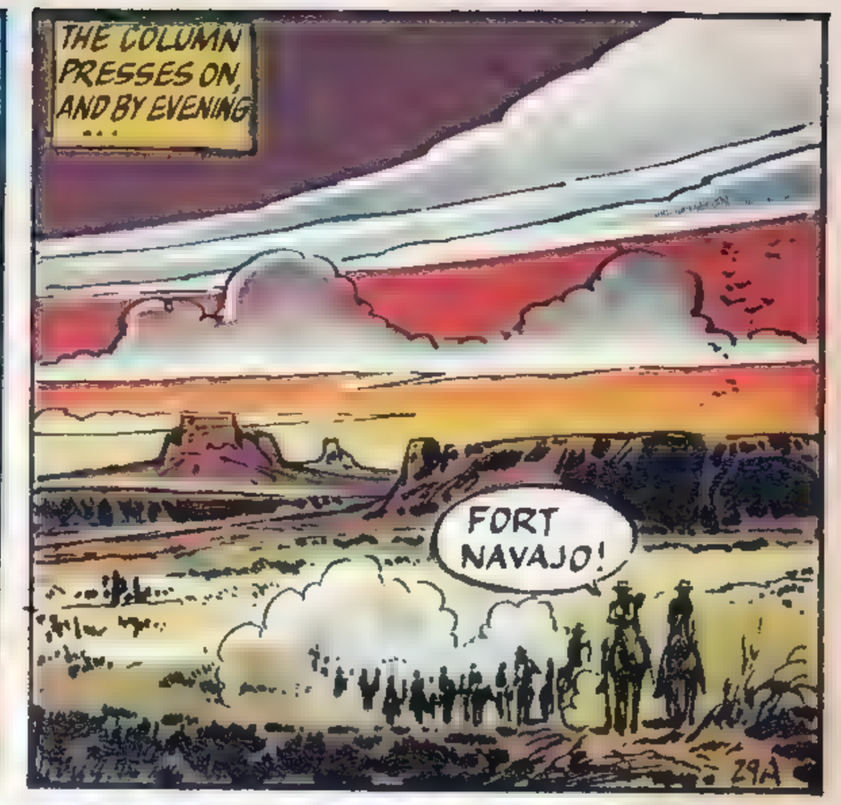

THE COLUMN HAS REJOINED ITS BAGGAGE TRAIN, GUARDED BY LIEUTENANT CROWE, AND SETS OFF BACK TO FORT NAVAJO.
THOUGHTFUL, BLUEBERRY?
BOTHERED, MORE LIKE... WE KILLED SEVERAL APACHES, INCLUDING THEIR CHIEF. THAT COULD START OFF A BIG RISING...

HEY THERE... BLUEBERRY!
?!!
IT'S CROWE!

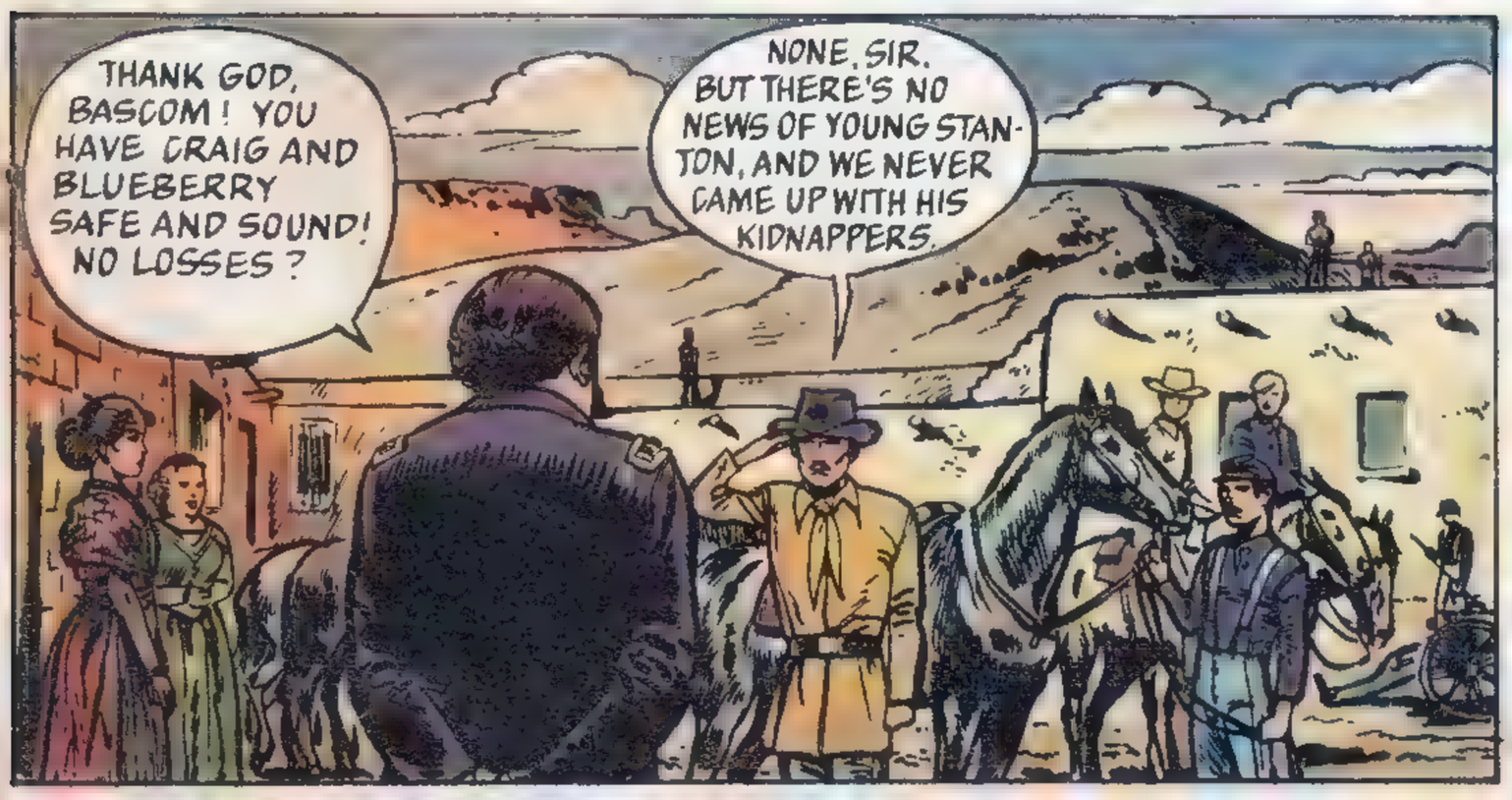

THE MEN JUST TOLD ME WHAT YOU DID, BLUEBERRY...THANKS! THOSE APACHES WERE INNOCENT!
SURE! BUT HOW ABOUT THE OTHERS?

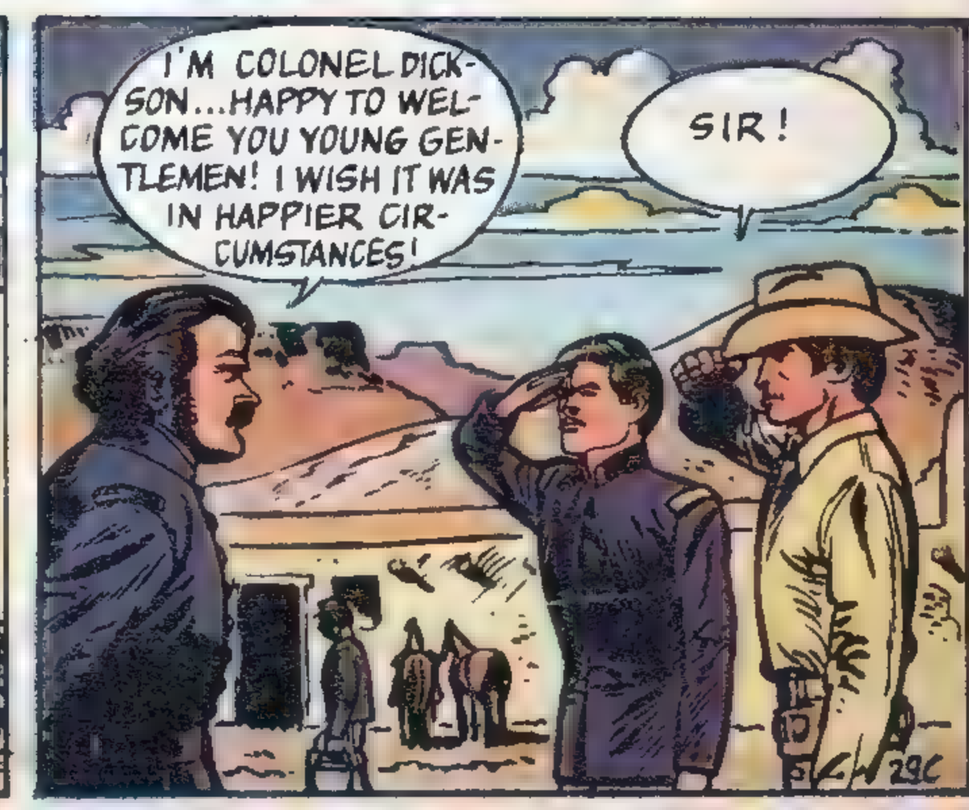

IT WASN'T THE APACHES THAT ATTACKED THE STANTONS, FOR SURE...MOST LIKELY A BAND OF MARAUDING INDIANS FROM MEXICO!
HM... BUT WHY WOULD...?
SAY, WHAT DID I TELL YOU, CRAIG? LOOK! I WAS AFRAID OF THAT!
23B

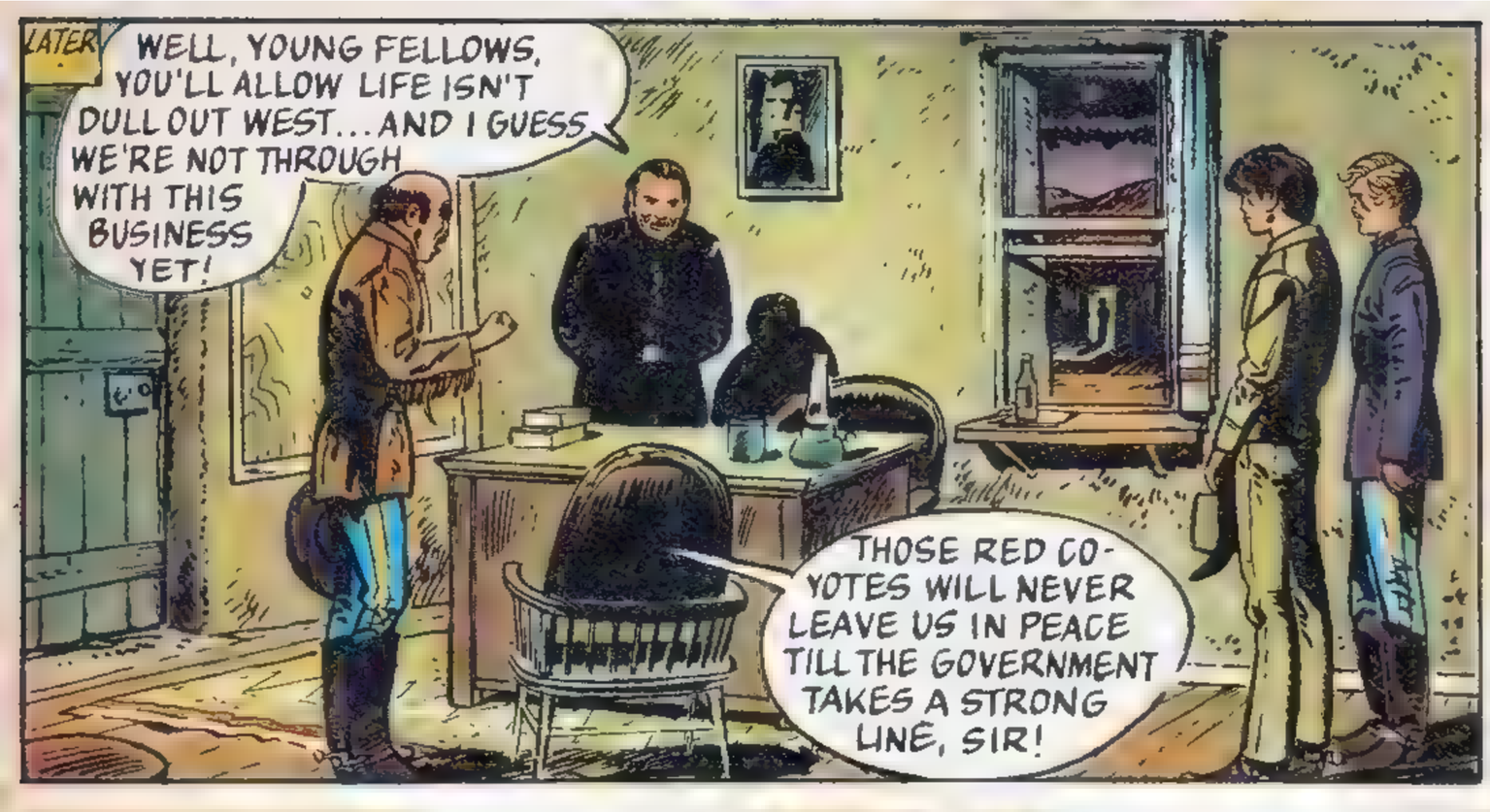

DAMN RED CO-YOTES!
SMOKE SIGNALS!
THEY'RE PASSING ON NEWS OF OUR AT-TACK. BY TOMORROW ALL NEW MEXICO WILL BE IN FERMENT!

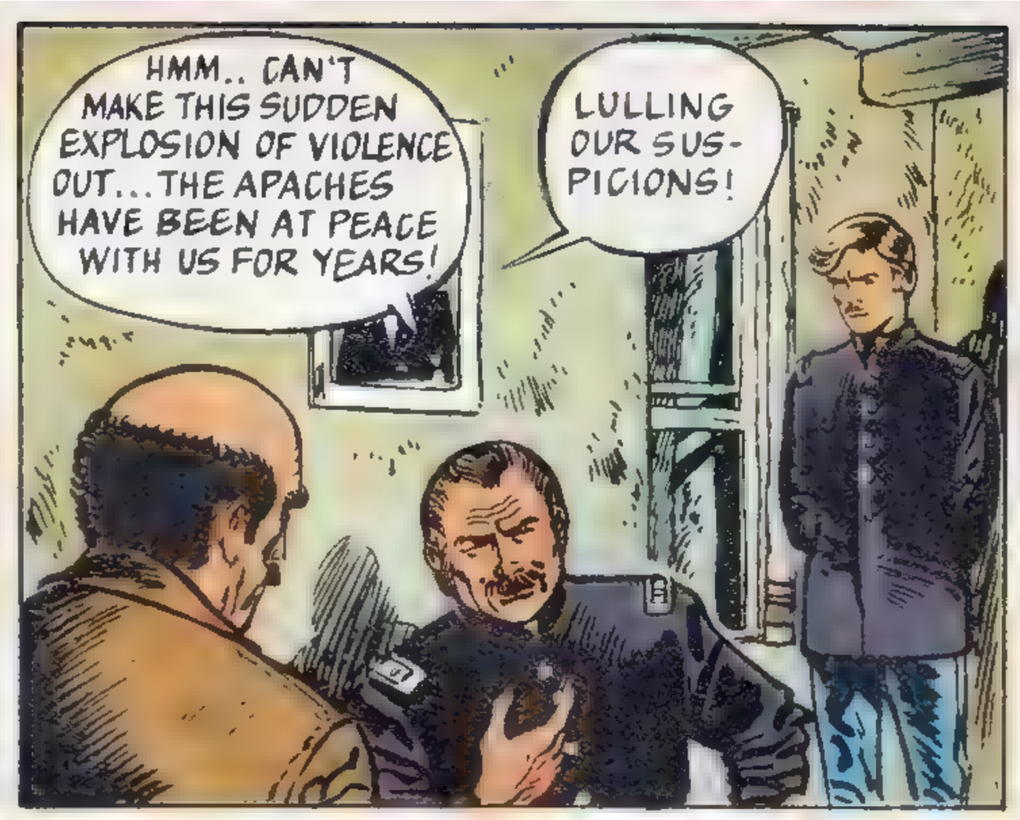

THE COLUMN PRESSES ON, AND BY EVENING ...
FORT NAVAJO!

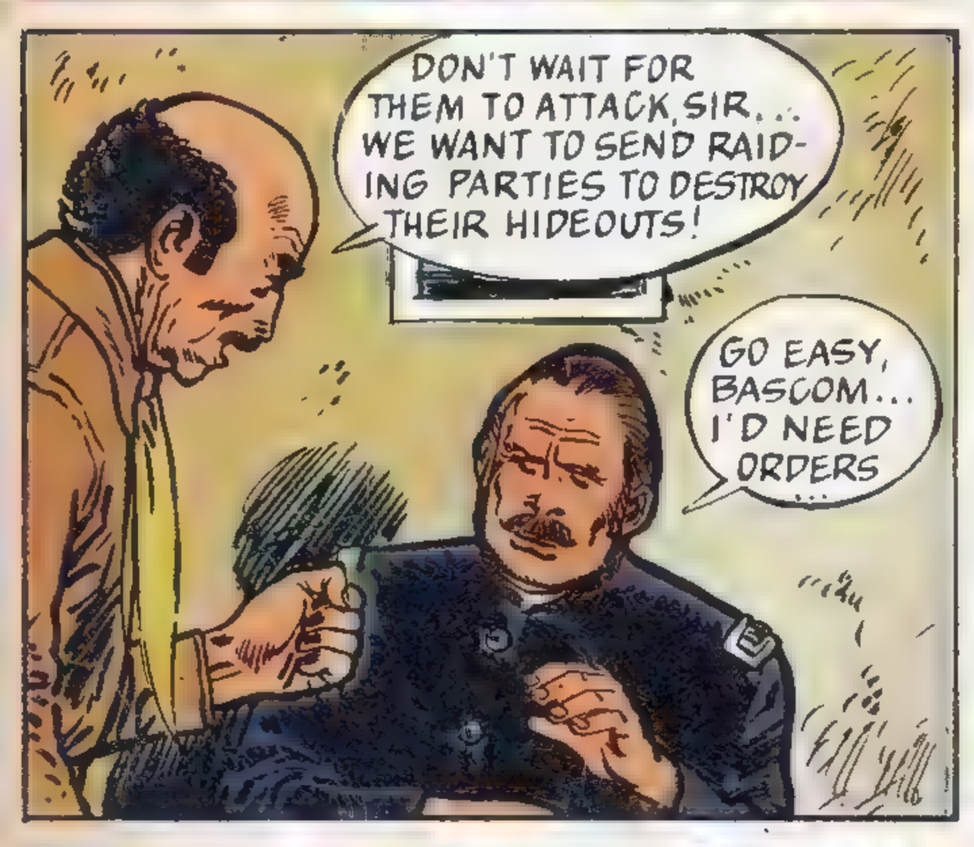
WHO GOES THERE?
SECOND SQUADRON, 17TH U.S. CAVALRY!
OPEN THE GATES, SERGEANT, AND TELL THE COL-ONEL MAJOR BAS-COM'S BACK!

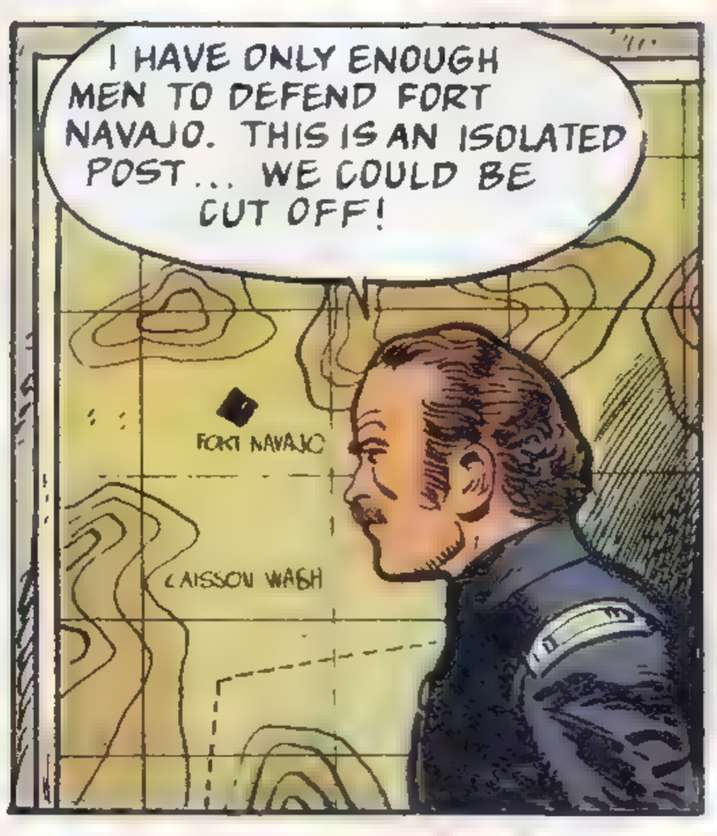

THANK GOD, BASCOM! YOU HAVE CRAIG AND BLUEBERRY SAFE AND SOUND! NO LOSSES?
NONE, SIR. BUT THERE'S NO NEWS OF YOUNG STAN-TON, AND WE NEVER CAME UP WITH HIS KIDNAPPERS.

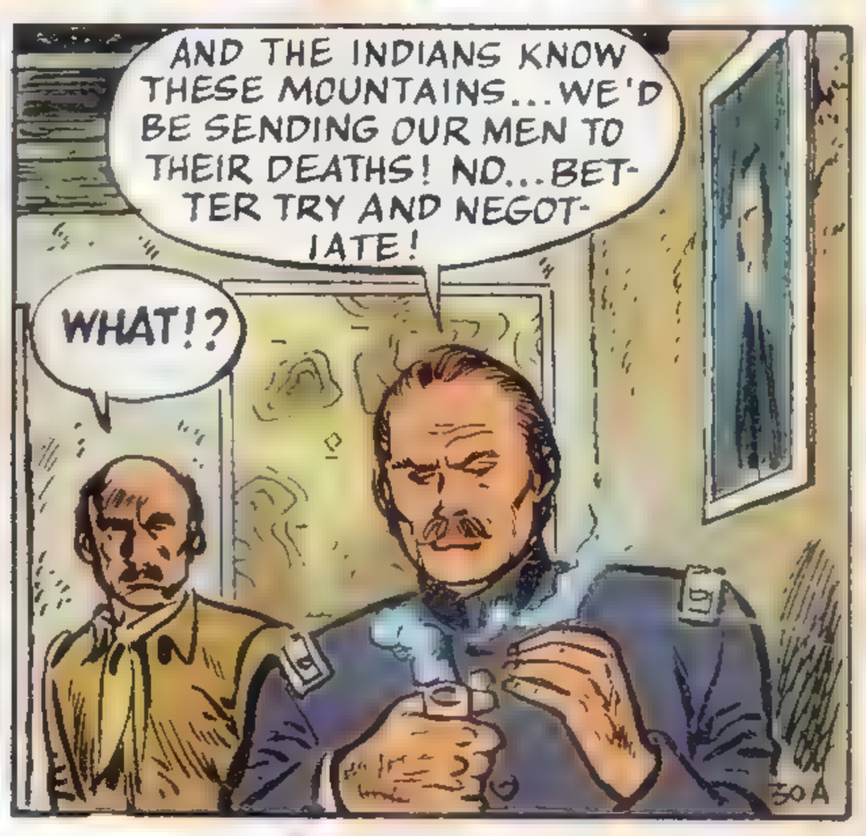

I'M COLONEL DICK-SON...HAPPY TO WEL-COME YOU YOUNG GEN-TLEMEN! I WISH IT WAS IN HAPPIER CIR-CUMSTANCES!
SIR!

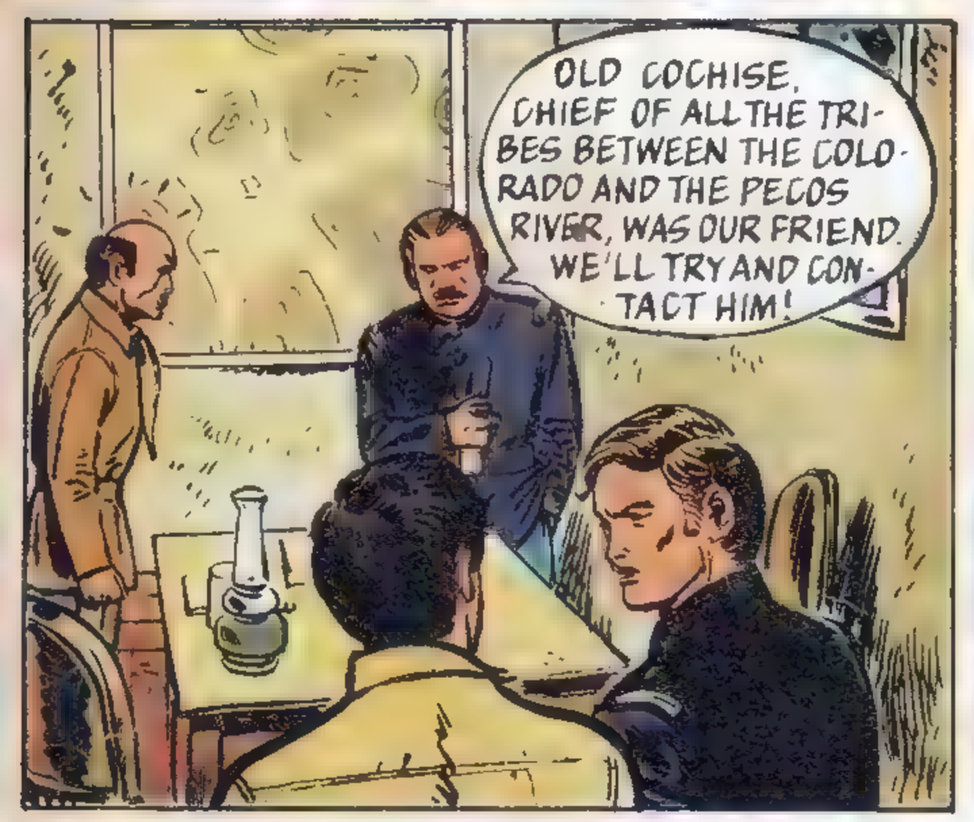

LATER
WELL, YOUNG FELLOWS, YOU'LL ALLOW LIFE ISN'T DULL OUT WEST... AND I GUESS WE'RE NOT THROUGH WITH THIS BUSINESS YET!
THOSE RED COYOTES WILL NEVER LEAVE US IN PEACE TILL THE GOVERNMENT TAKES A STRONG LINE, SIR!

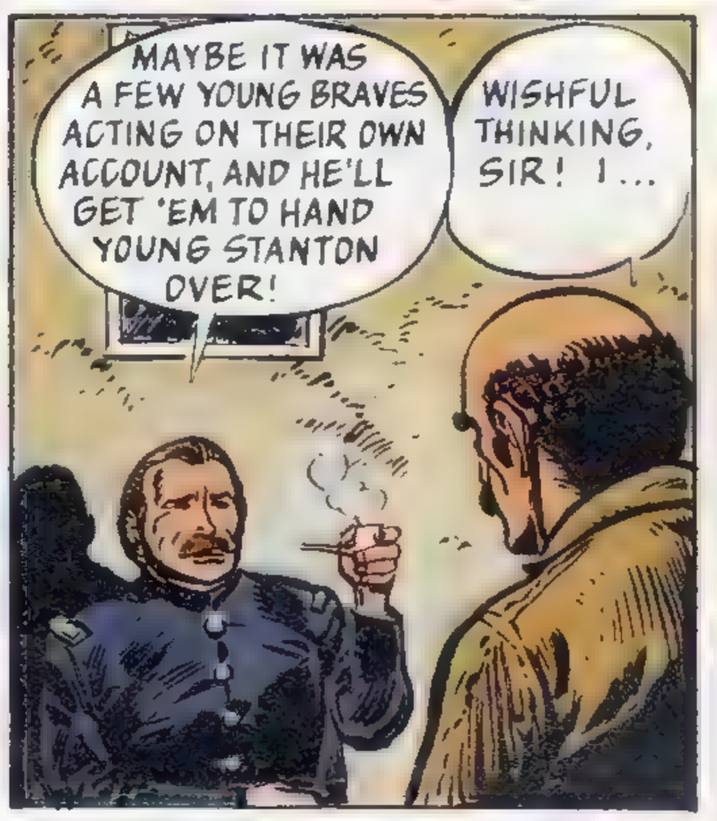

HMM.. CAN'T MAKE THIS SUDDEN EXPLOSION OF VIOLENCE OUT... THE APACHES HAVE BEEN AT PEACE WITH US FOR YEARS!
LULLING OUR SUSPICIONS!


DON'T WAIT FOR THEM TO ATTACK, SIR... WE WANT TO SEND RAIDING PARTIES TO DESTROY THEIR HIDEOUTS!
GO EASY, BASCOM... I'D NEED ORDERS

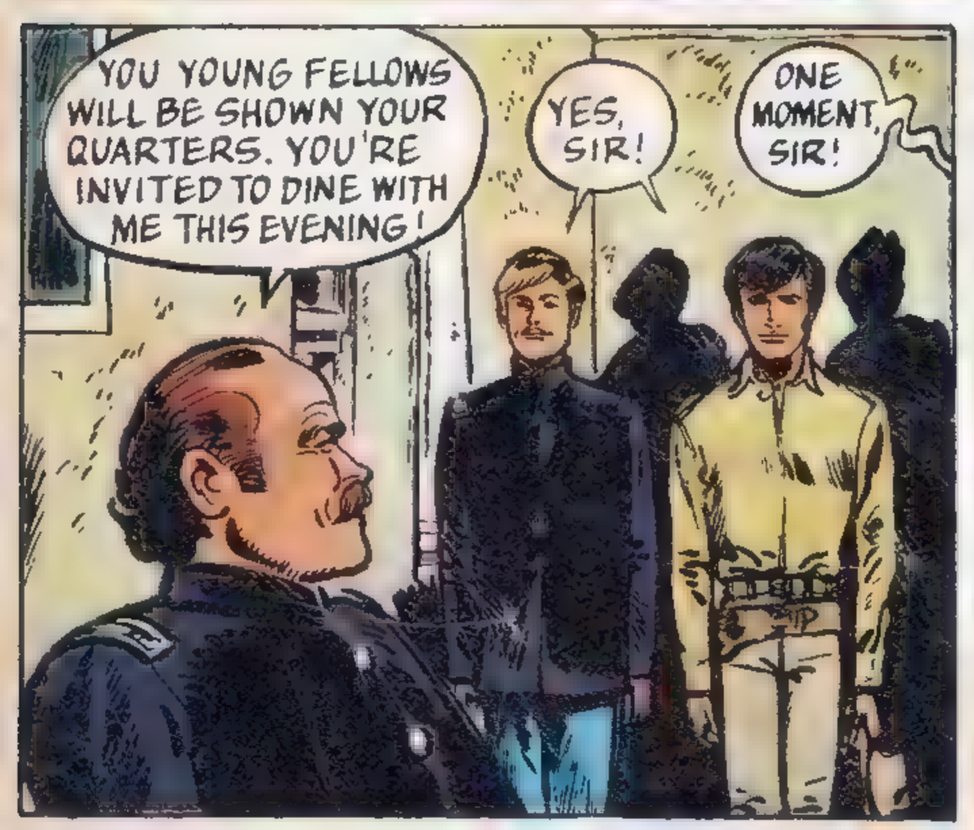

I HAVE ONLY ENOUGH MEN TO DEFEND FORT NAVAJO. THIS IS AN ISOLATED POST... WE COULD BE CUT OFF!
FORT NAVAJO
CAISSON WASH

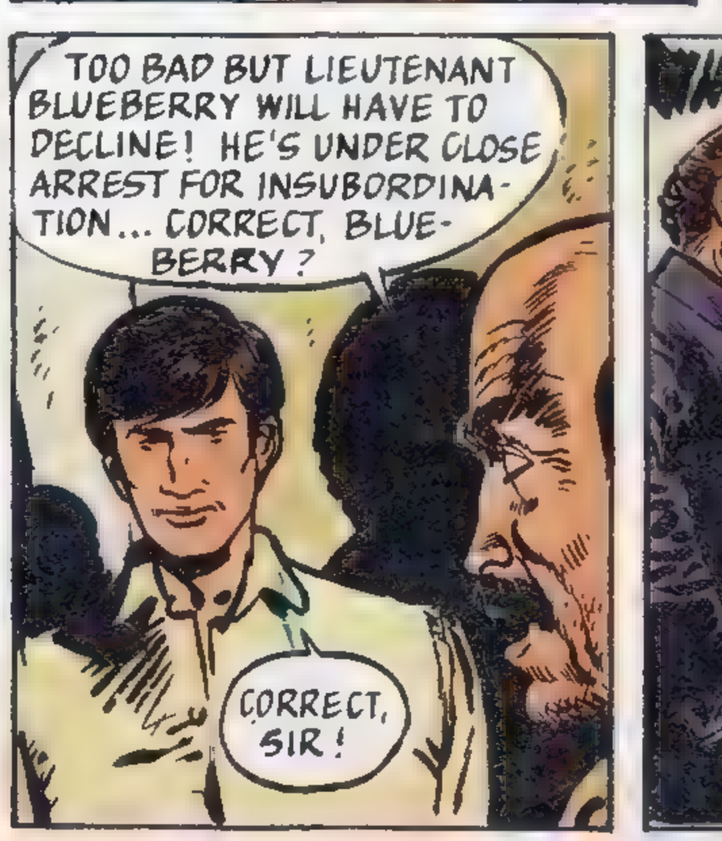

AND THE INDIANS KNOW THESE MOUNTAINS... WE'D BE SENDING OUR MEN TO THEIR DEATHS! NO... BETTER TRY AND NEGOTIATE!
WHAT!?

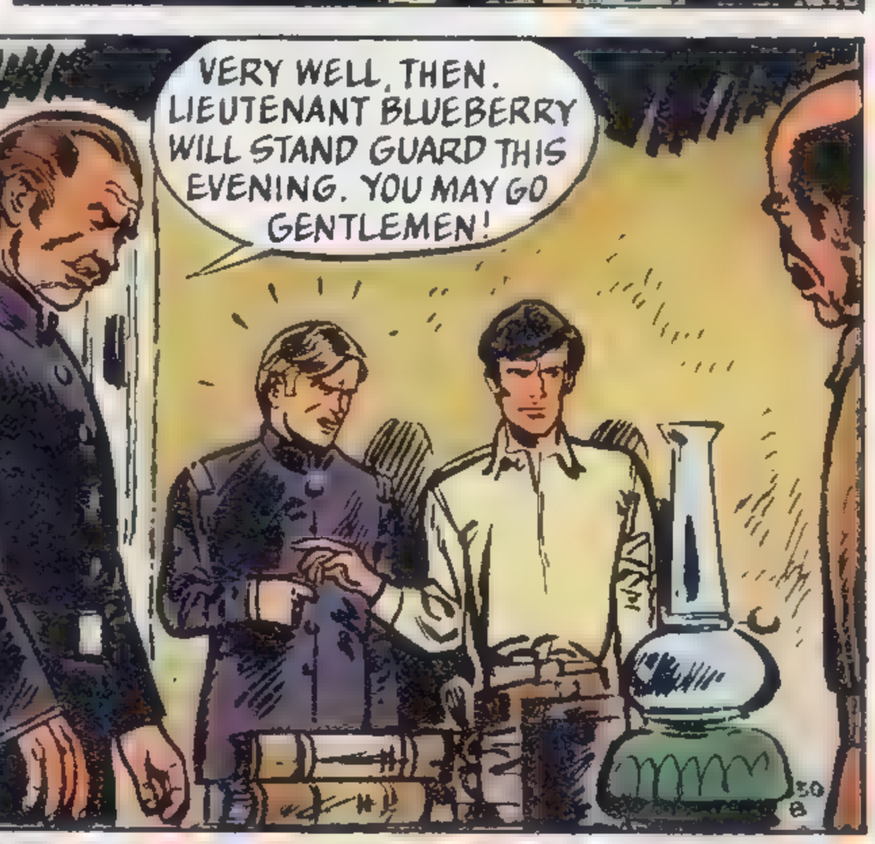

OLD COCHISE, CHIEF OF ALL THE TRIBES BETWEEN THE COLORADO AND THE PECOS RIVER, WAS OUR FRIEND. WE'LL TRY AND CONTACT HIM!


MAYBE IT WAS A FEW YOUNG BRAVES ACTING ON THEIR OWN ACCOUNT, AND HE'LL GET 'EM TO HAND YOUNG STANTON OVER!
WISHFUL THINKING, SIR! I...

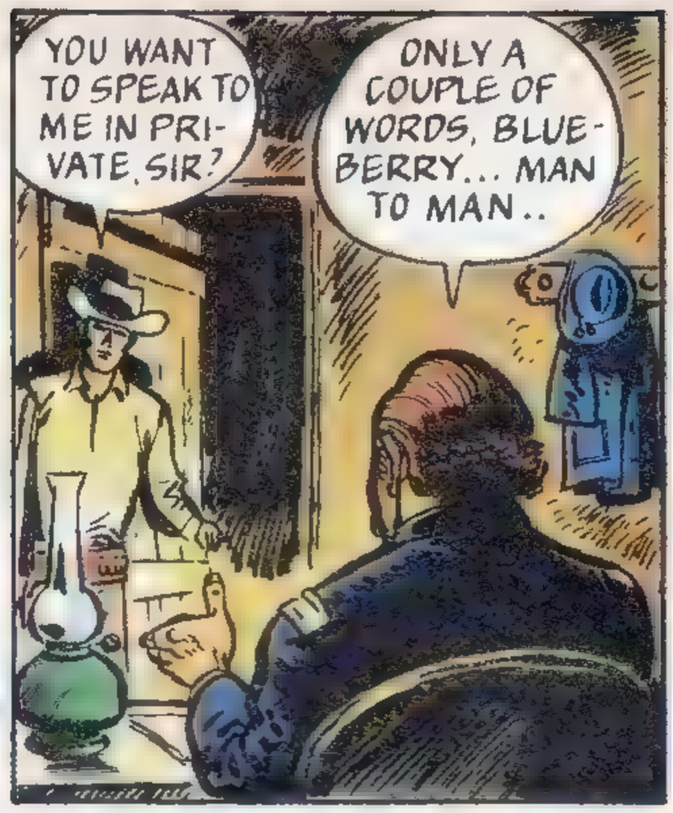
SEND A MESSENGER TO SANTA FÉ FOR REINFORCEMENTS! DOUBLE THE GUARD AND STRENGTHEN THE DEFENSES!
YES, SIR!


YOU YOUNG FELLOWS WILL BE SHOWN YOUR QUARTERS. YOU'RE INVITED TO DINE WITH ME THIS EVENING!
YES, SIR!
ONE MOMENT, SIR!

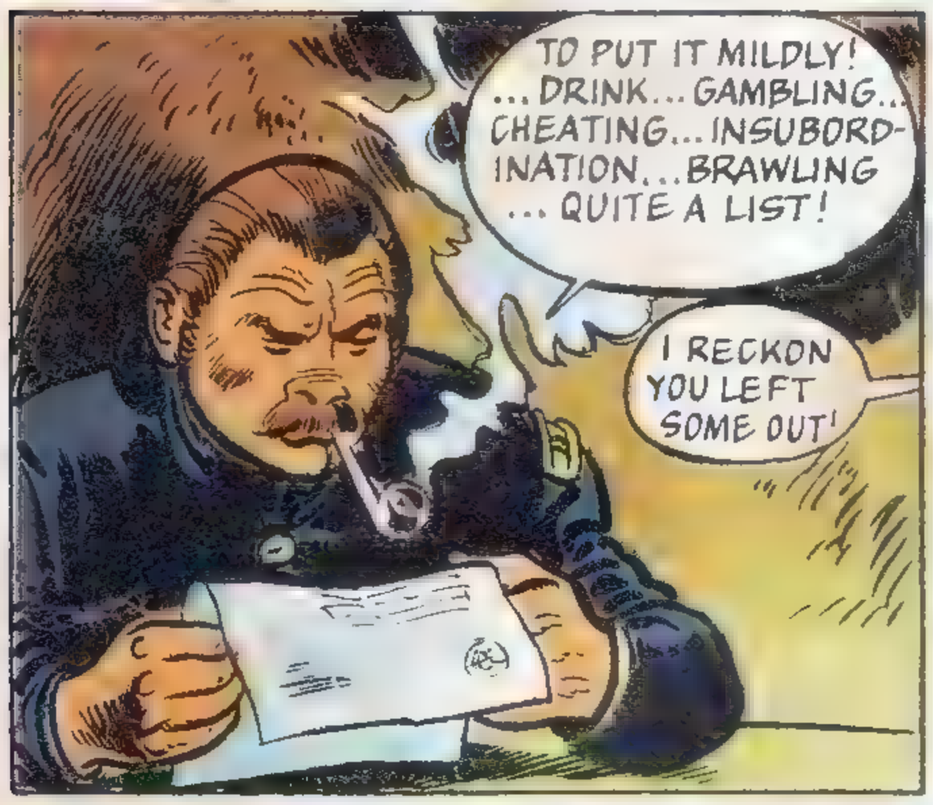

TOO BAD BUT LIEUTENANT BLUEBERRY WILL HAVE TO DECLINE! HE'S UNDER CLOSE ARREST FOR INSUBORDINATION... CORRECT, BLUEBERRY?
CORRECT, SIR!

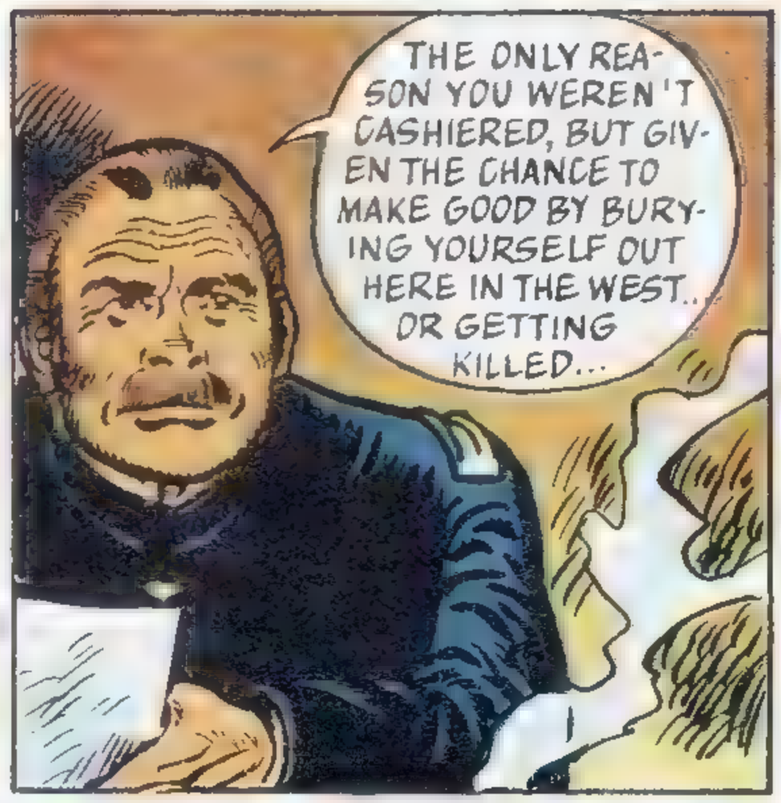

VERY WELL, THEN. LIEUTENANT BLUEBERRY WILL STAND GUARD THIS EVENING. YOU MAY GO GENTLEMEN!

JUST A MOMENT, BLUE-BERRY...


YOU WANT TO SPEAK TO ME IN PRI-VATE, SIR?
ONLY A COUPLE OF WORDS, BLUE-BERRY... MAN TO MAN..

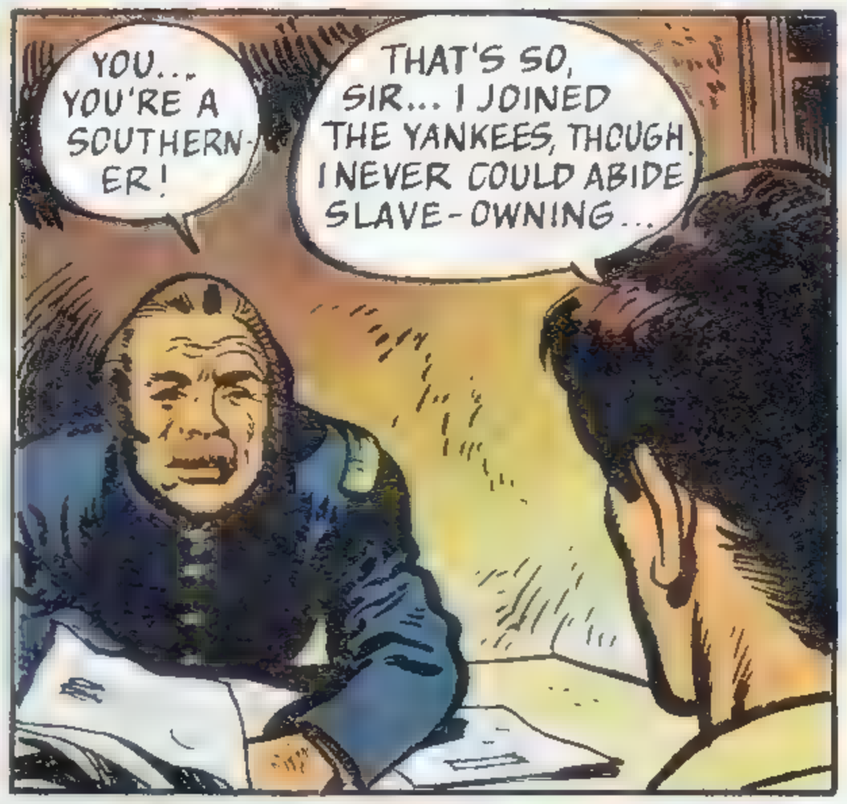
THIS REPORT ON YOU CAME BY THE STAGE, JUST AHEAD OF YOU...
HM... UNCOMPLIM-ENTARY, EH?

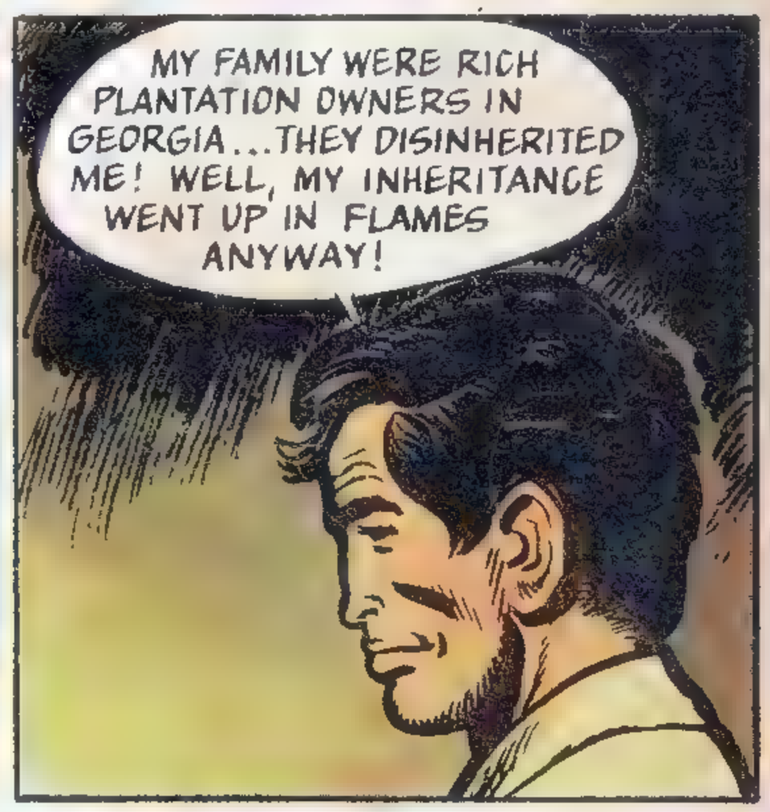

TO PUT IT MILDLY! ...DRINK...GAMBLING... CHEATING...INSUBORD-INATION...BRAWLING ...QUITE A LIST!
I RECKON YOU LEFT SOME OUT!

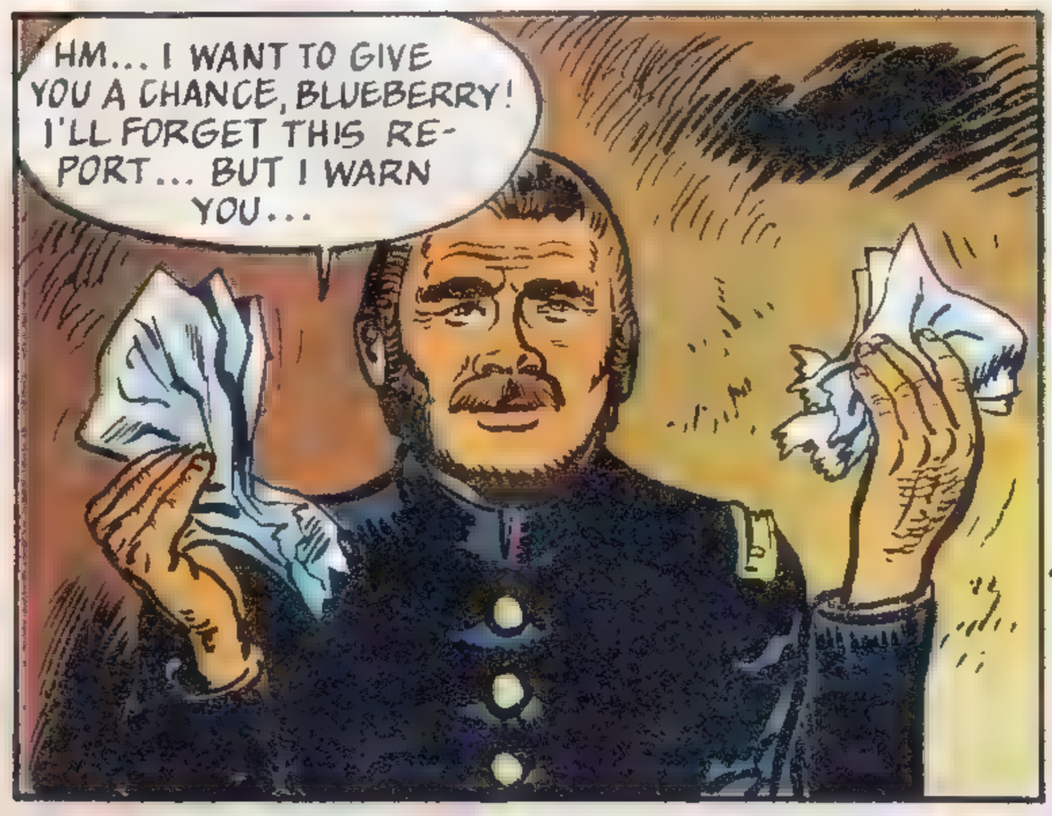

THE ONLY REA-SON YOU WEREN'T CASHIERED, BUT GIV-EN THE CHANCE TO MAKE GOOD BY BURY-ING YOURSELF OUT HERE IN THE WEST.. OR GETTING KILLED...

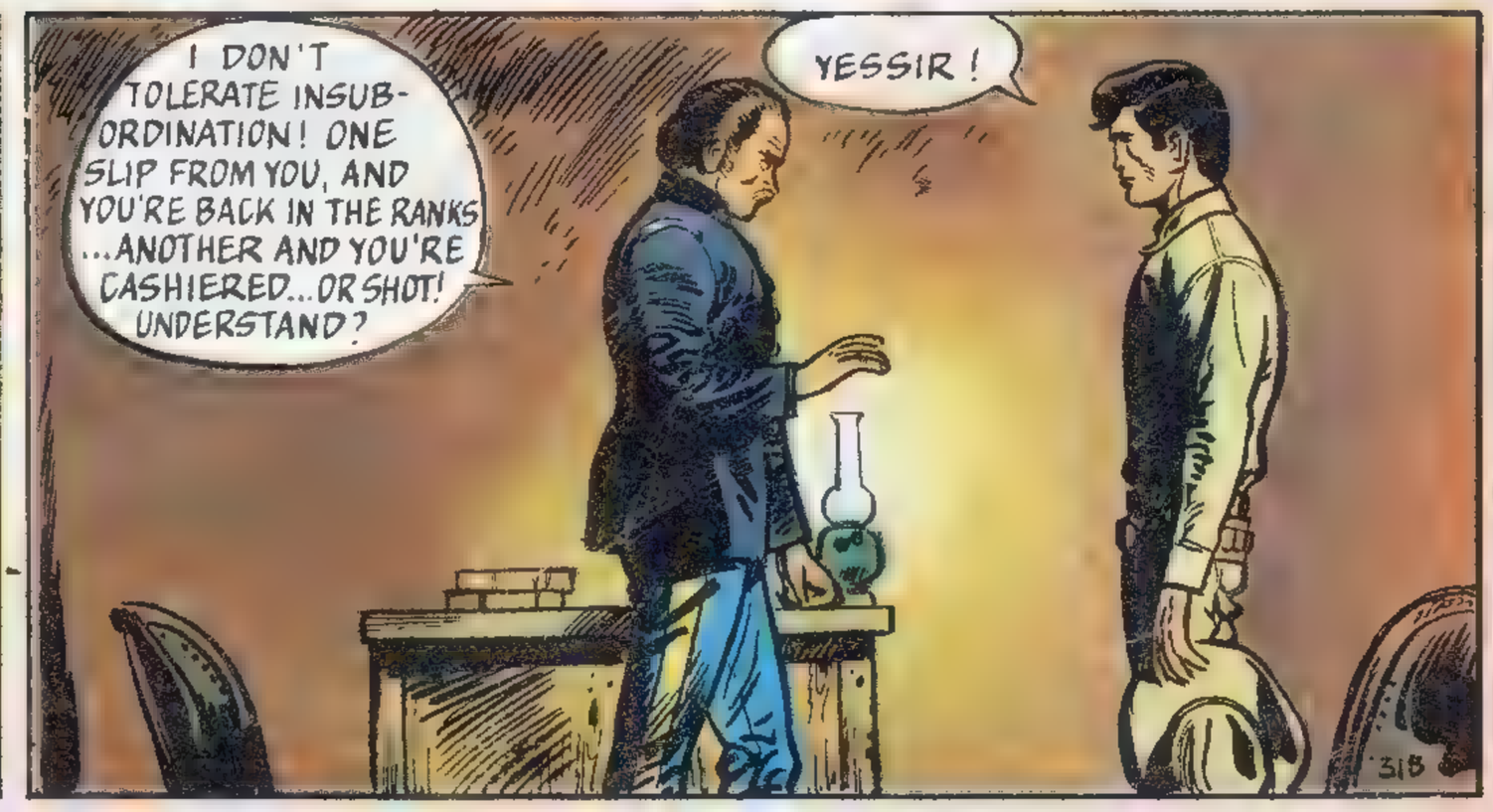
...IS YOUR FINE RECORD IN THE CIVIL WAR *
THANKS A LOT!
* 1861-65
31A

JOINED THE VOL-UNTEERS AS A BUGLER... TWICE WOUNDED IN ACTION ...SIX TIMES MENTIONED IN DISPATCHES...ENDED THE WAR AS A LIEUTENANT AND...GOOD GOD!

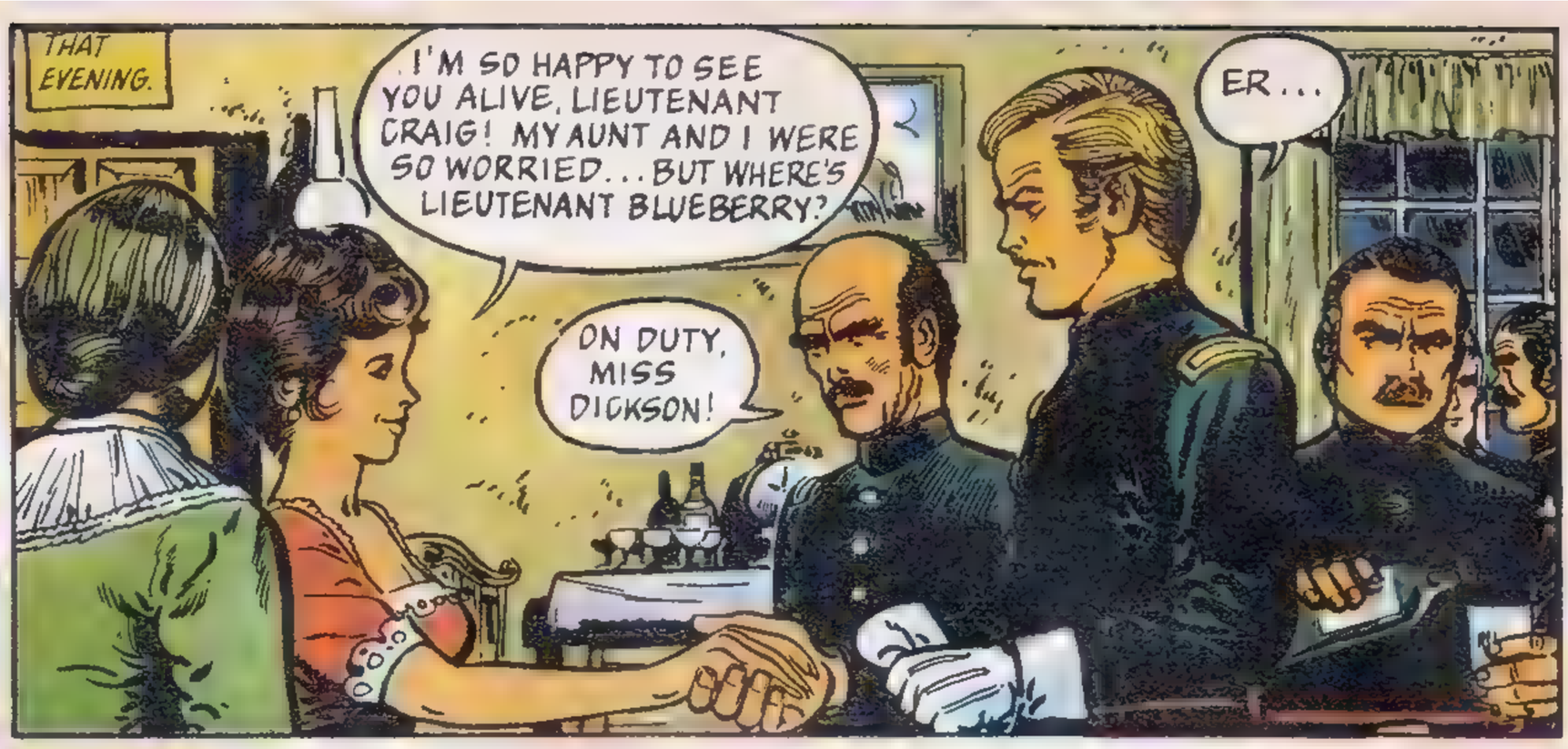

YOU... YOU'RE A SOUTHERN-ER!
THAT'S SO, SIR... I JOINED THE YANKEES, THOUGH I NEVER COULD ABIDE SLAVE-OWNING...


MY FAMILY WERE RICH PLANTATION OWNERS IN GEORGIA...THEY DISINHERITED ME! WELL, MY INHERITANCE WENT UP IN FLAMES ANYWAY!

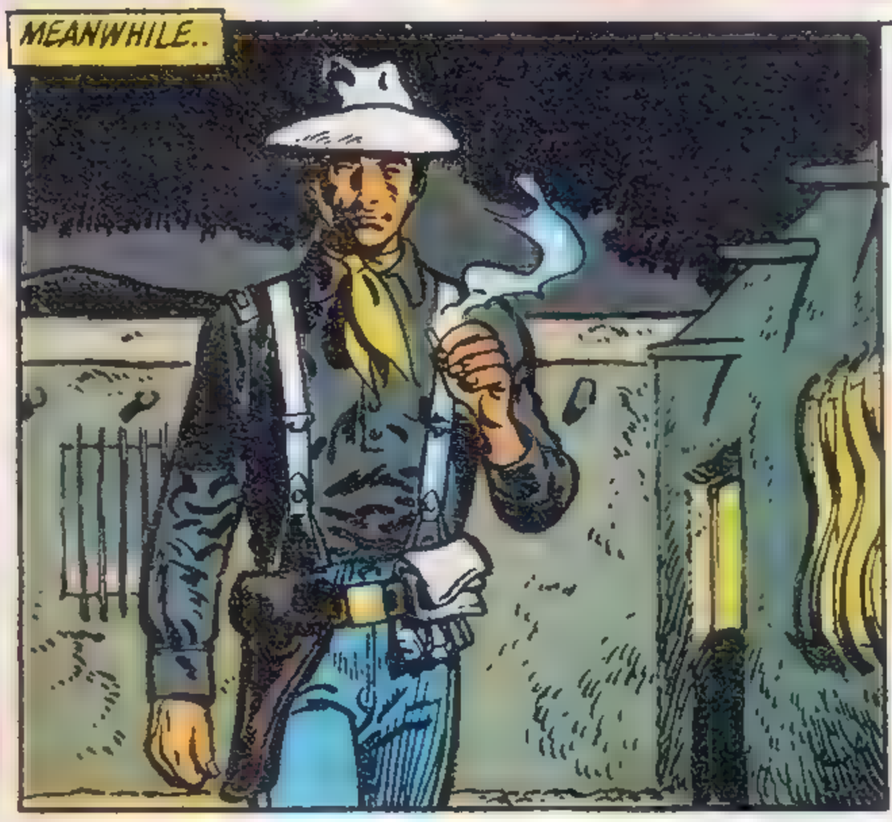

HM... I WANT TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE, BLUEBERRY! I'LL FORGET THIS RE-PORT... BUT I WARN YOU...


I DON'T TOLERATE INSUB-ORDINATION! ONE SLIP FROM YOU, AND YOU'RE BACK IN THE RANKS ...ANOTHER AND YOU'RE CASHIERED...OR SHOT! UNDERSTAND?
YESSIR!
31B

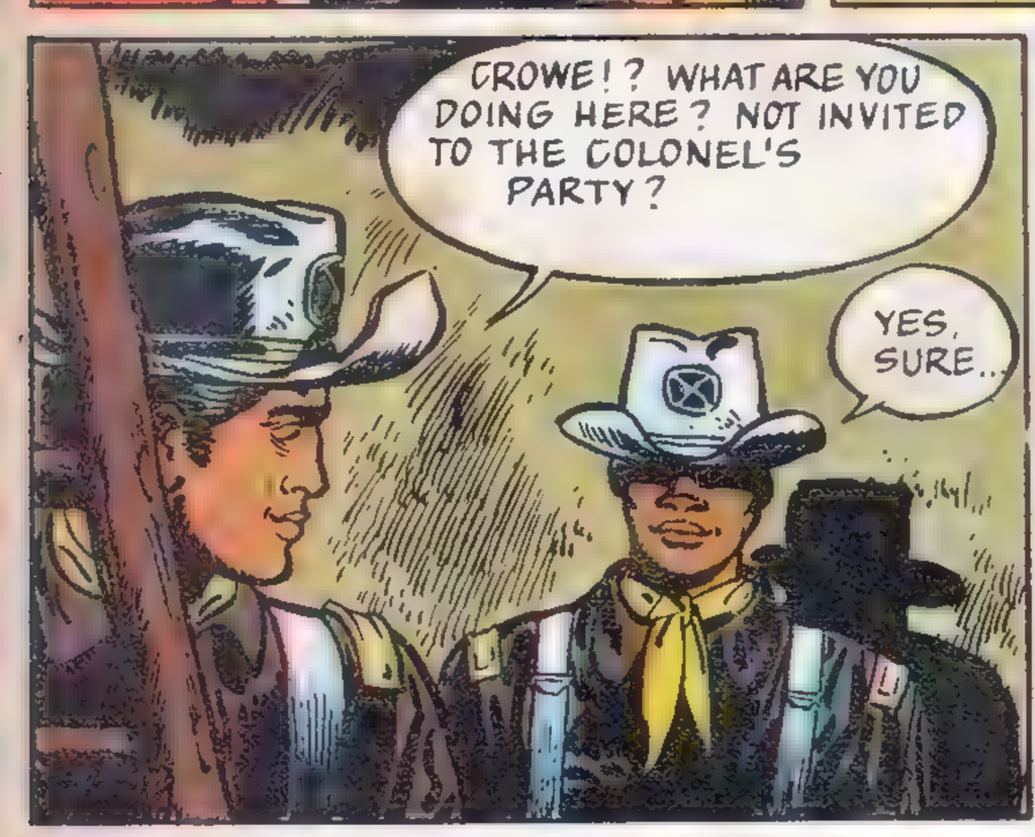
GO FIND YOUR QUARTERS AND REST. YOU'RE ON DUTY THIS EVENING AND YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN... THERE COULD BE TROUBLE!


THAT EVENING.
I'M SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU ALIVE, LIEUTENANT CRAIG! MY AUNT AND I WERE SO WORRIED... BUT WHERE'S LIEUTENANT BLUEBERRY?
ON DUTY, MISS DICKSON!
ER...

ON DUTY? THE DAY HE ARRIVES?
CRAIG, I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO THE OTHER OFFICERS.


MEANWHILE..

BETTER PUT THAT CIGARETTE OUT IF YOU'RE GOING UP ON THE WALLS... MAKES A FINE TARGET IN THE DARK!
32A


CROWE!? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? NOT INVITED TO THE COLONEL'S PARTY?
YES, SURE..

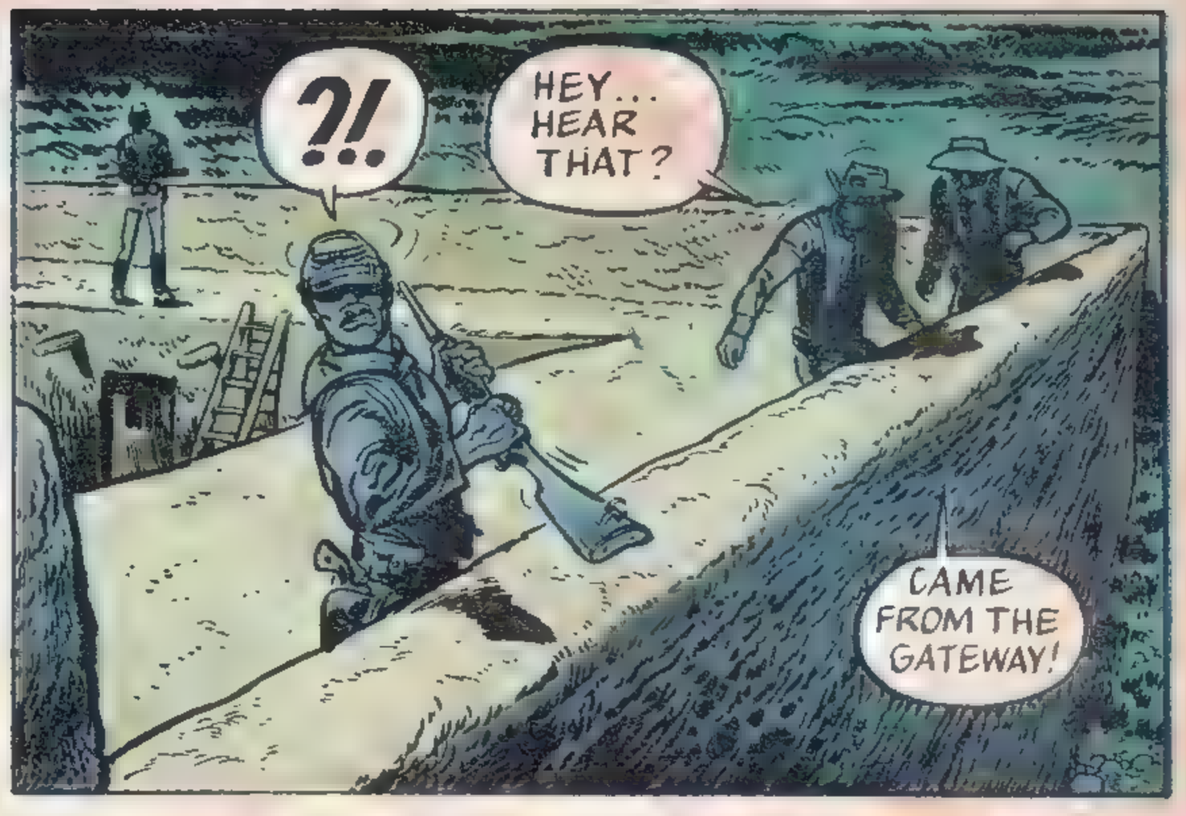
...BUT I ALWAYS REFUSE ...CAN'T DO THE PRETTY, AND ...WELL, I GUESS THEY LOOK DOWN ON ME! MY INDIAN BLOOD...
I SEE!

WELL, THANKS FOR THE TIP... BUT I'VE SEEN TOO MUCH ACTION TO FORGET AN ELEMENTARY PRECAUTION LIKE THAT!
I'LL COME UP TOO...

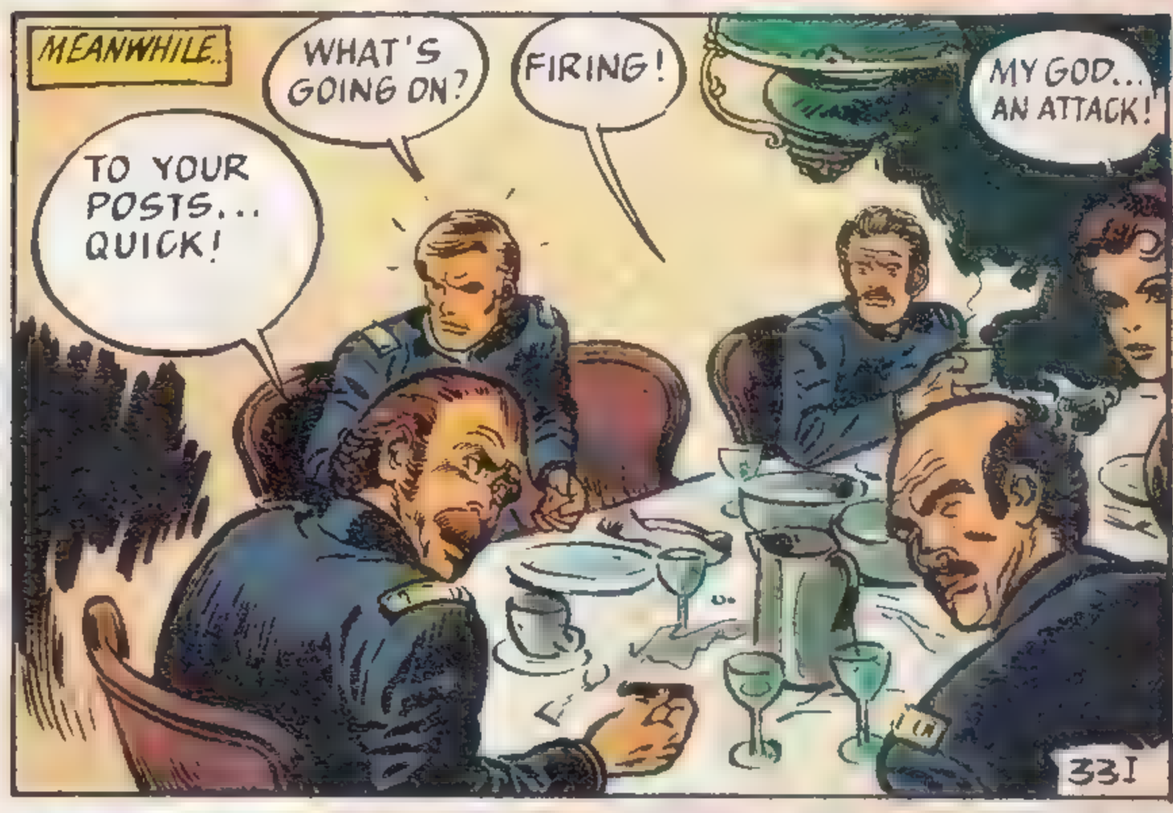
LATER..
HOLY SMOKE! IT'S DARK... CAN'T SEE TEN YARDS OUTSIDE THE WALLS! SEEMS QUIET ENOUGH THOUGH
HMM... I DON'T KNOW... I HAVE GOOD INDIAN EARS...
32B

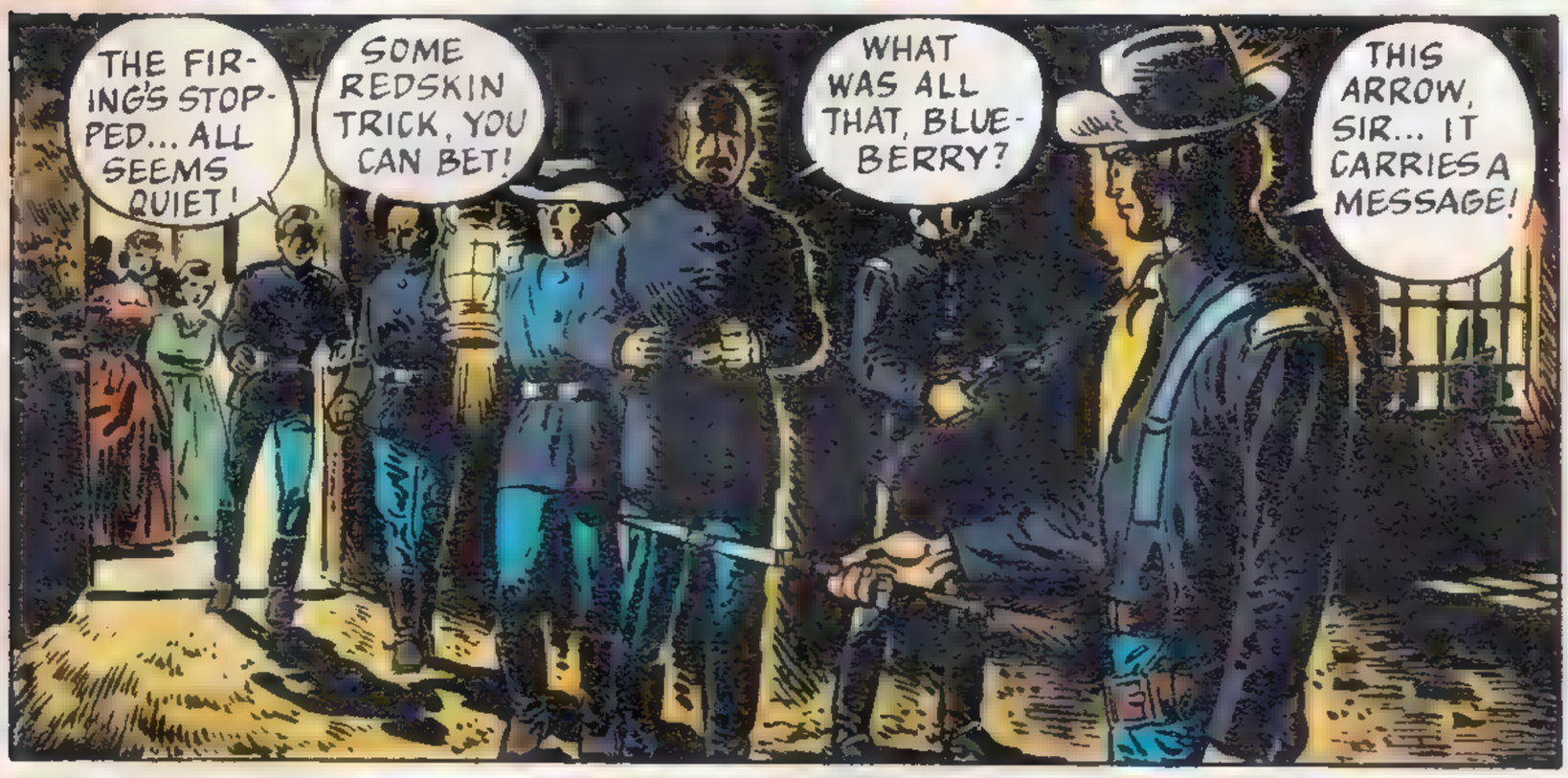
...AND I GET A FEELING THERE'S SOMEONE OUT THERE!

TCHAC!

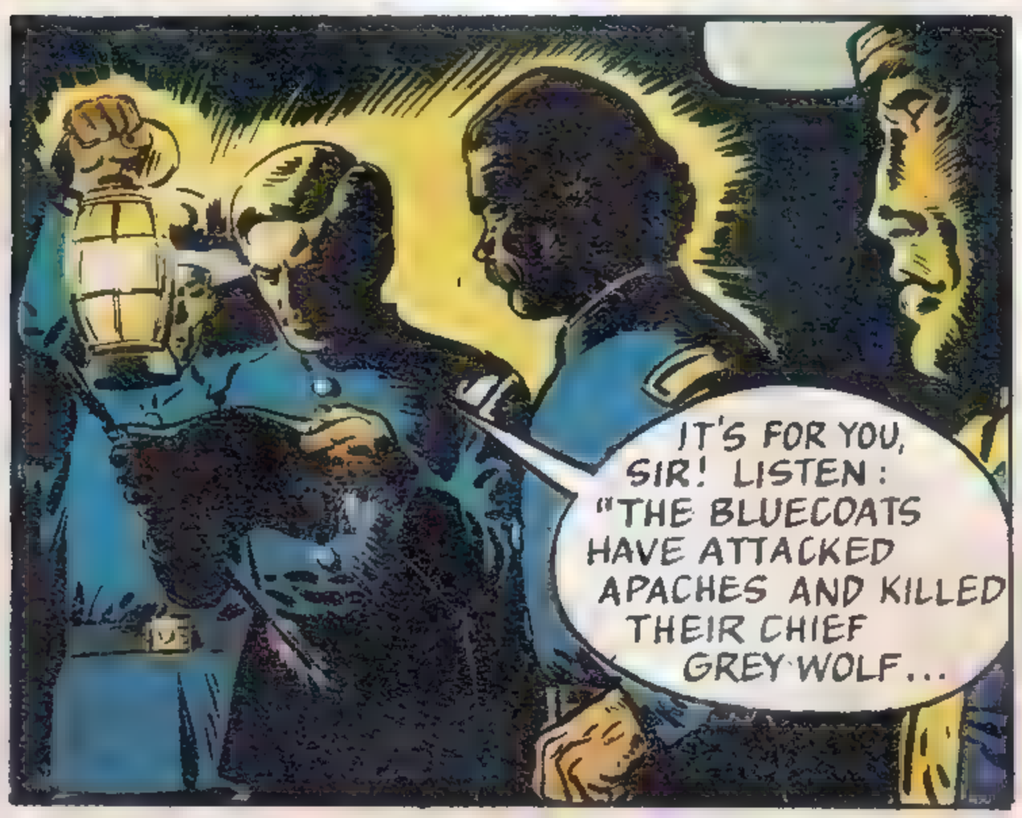

?!
HEY... HEAR THAT?
CAME FROM THE GATEWAY!

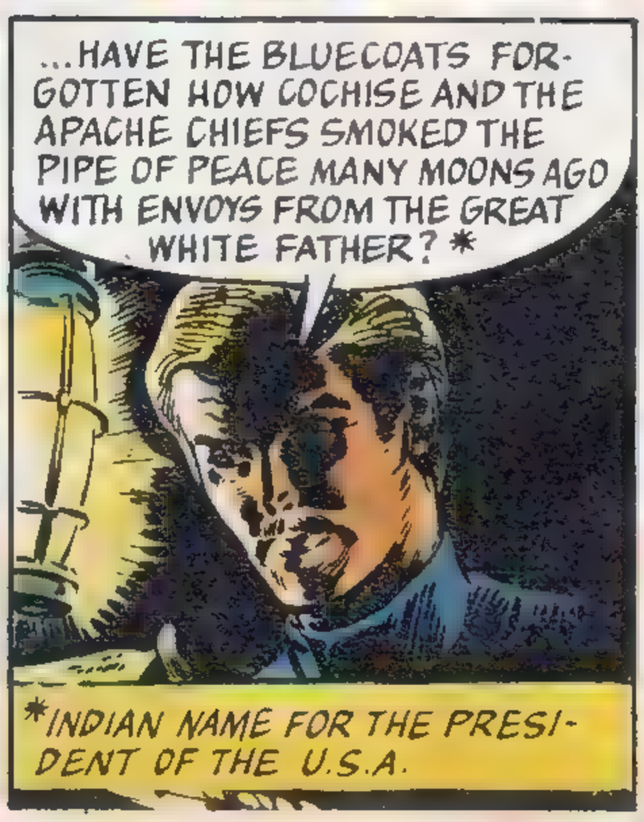
AN ARROW STICKING IN THE GATE! APACHES! I'LL TAKE A LOOK!
WATCH OUT!
BANG!!
CARE-FUL... COULD BE A TRAP!

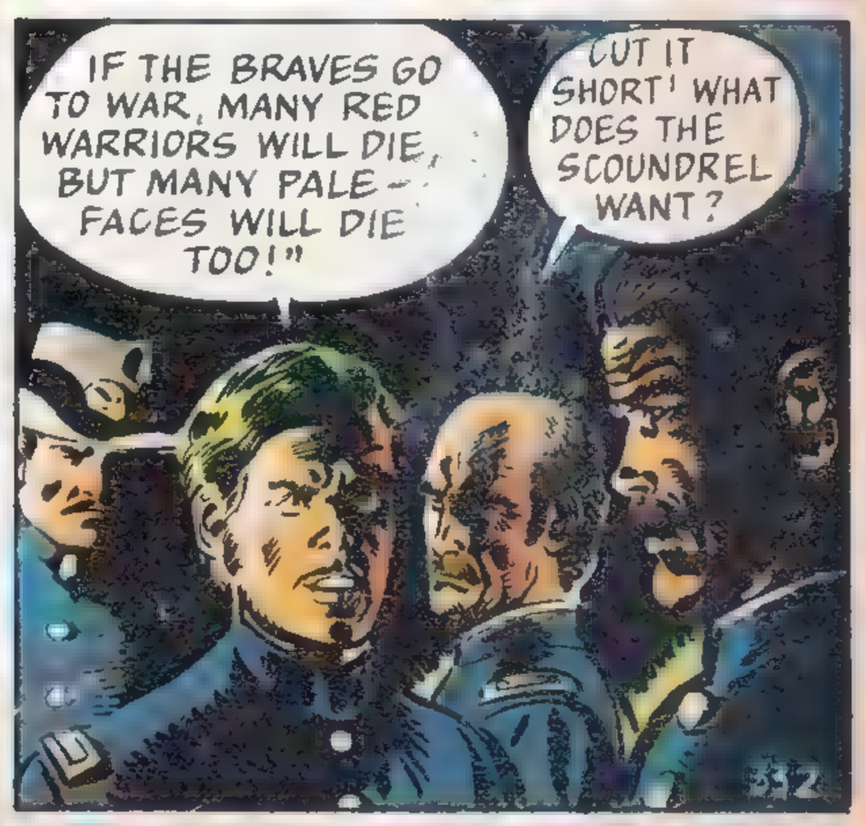

MEANWHILE...
WHAT'S GOING ON?
FIRING!
MY GOD... AN ATTACK!
TO YOUR POSTS... QUICK!
331


THE FIR-ING'S STOP-PED... ALL SEEMS QUIET!
SOME REDSKIN TRICK, YOU CAN BET!
WHAT WAS ALL THAT, BLUE-BERRY?
THIS ARROW, SIR... IT CARRIES A MESSAGE!

A BIT OF SKIN ROLLED AROUND THE SHAFT... WAIT, THAT DRAWING IS COCHISE'S SIGNATURE! I CAN'T MAKE THIS SCRAWL OUT... CRAIG, TRY TO READ IT!


IT'S FOR YOU, SIR! LISTEN: "THE BLUECOATS HAVE ATTACKED APACHES AND KILLED THEIR CHIEF GREY WOLF...


...HAVE THE BLUECOATS FOR-GOTTEN HOW COCHISE AND THE APACHE CHIEFS SMOKED THE PIPE OF PEACE MANY MOONS AGO WITH ENVOYS FROM THE GREAT WHITE FATHER? *
*INDIAN NAME FOR THE PRESI-DENT OF THE U.S.A.


IF THE BRAVES GO TO WAR, MANY RED WARRIORS WILL DIE, BUT MANY PALE-FACES WILL DIE TOO!"
CUT IT SHORT! WHAT DOES THE SCOUNDREL WANT?
332

COCHISE SAYS HE HIMSELF DOES NOT WANT WAR, BUT HE DEMANDS COMPENSATION FOR YESTERDAY'S TREACHEROUS ATTACK!

WHAT? COMPENSATION? HA, HA, HA! IMPUDENCE! AND HOW ABOUT THE STANTONS? WHY LISTEN TO THIS RUBBISH, SIR?

ONE MOMENT, BASCOM. THE MESSAGE ISN'T FINISHED

NO, SIR. COCHISE SAYS HE AND THE OTHER APACHE CHIEFS ARE READY TO MEET YOU AND NEGOTIATE.

IT'S A TRAP, SIR!

I GUESS NOT... COCHISE SAYS THEY'LL COME TO FORT NAVAJO, IF THE COLONEL GIVES HIS WORD TO LET THEM LEAVE FREELY, WHATEVER THE RESULT OF THE TALKS.

SIR, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LOWER YOURSELF TO TALK TO THESE SAVAGES!!?

HMMM...

WHY DIDN'T COCHISE COME TO THE FORT HIMSELF, INSTEAD OF SENDING THIS ARROW?

HE DAREN'T SIR...

HIS MESSAGE SAYS HE NO LONGER TRUSTS US... IF YOU ACCEPT HIS OFFER, HE WANTS A WHITE FLAG HOISTED ABOVE THE FORT WALLS AS A SIGNAL!

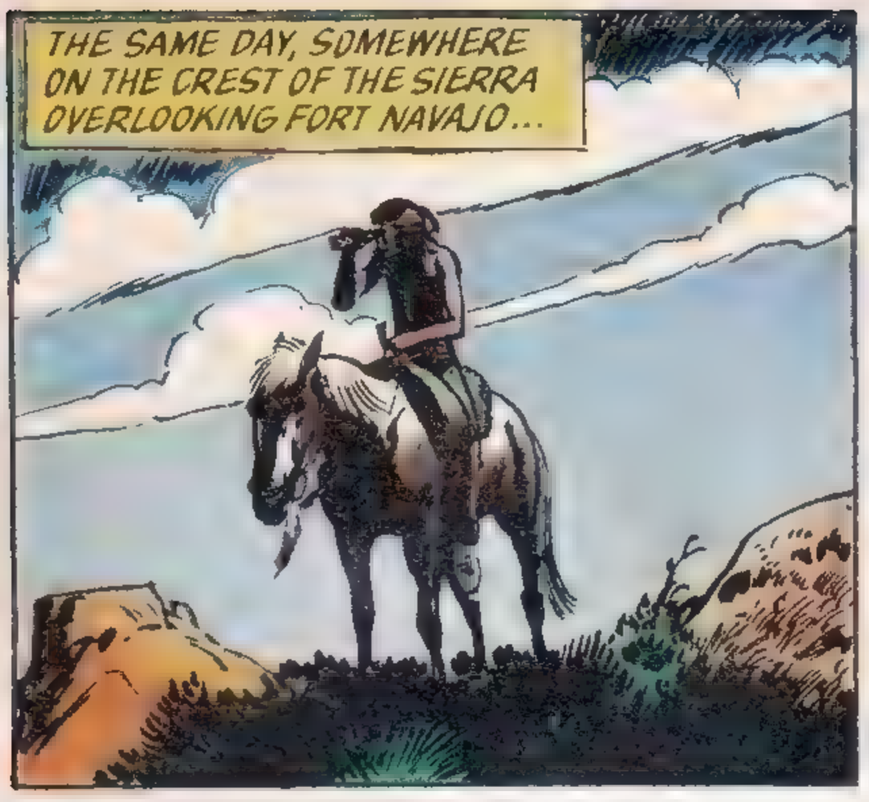
SIR! NO AMERICAN OFFICER WORTHY OF THE NAME CAN ACCEPT AN ULTIMATUM LIKE THIS!

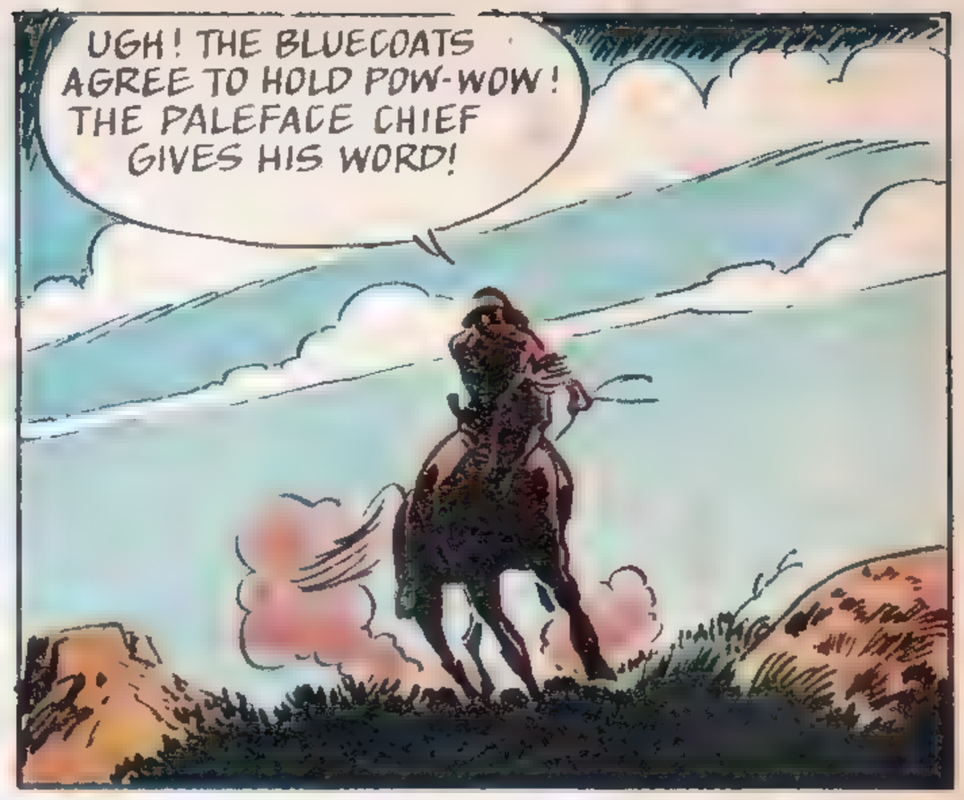
ANY KIND OF TREATY IS BETTER THAN WAR, BASCOM...

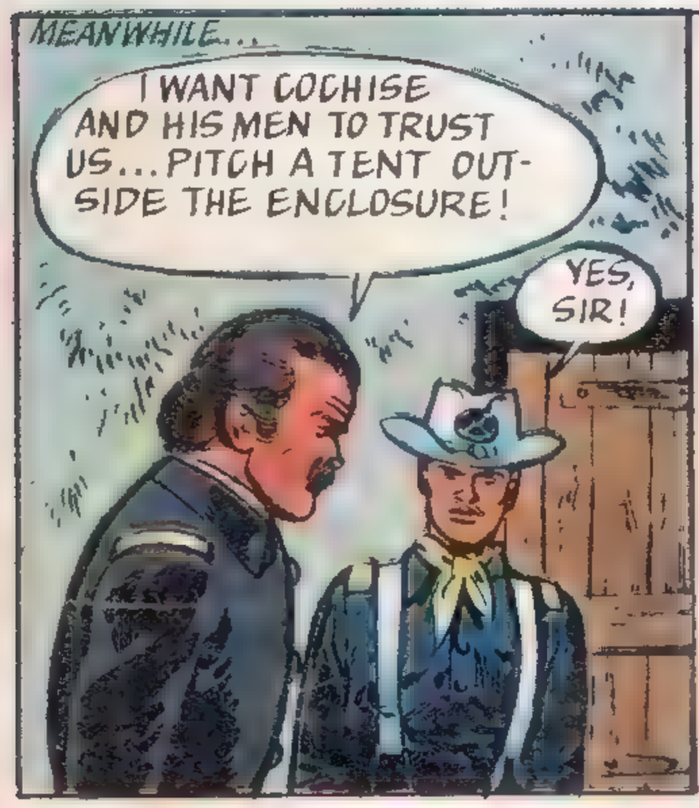
WE'RE TOO ISOLATED HERE... OUR GARRISON IS WEAK, AND THERE ARE WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE PLACE. WE NEED TIME.

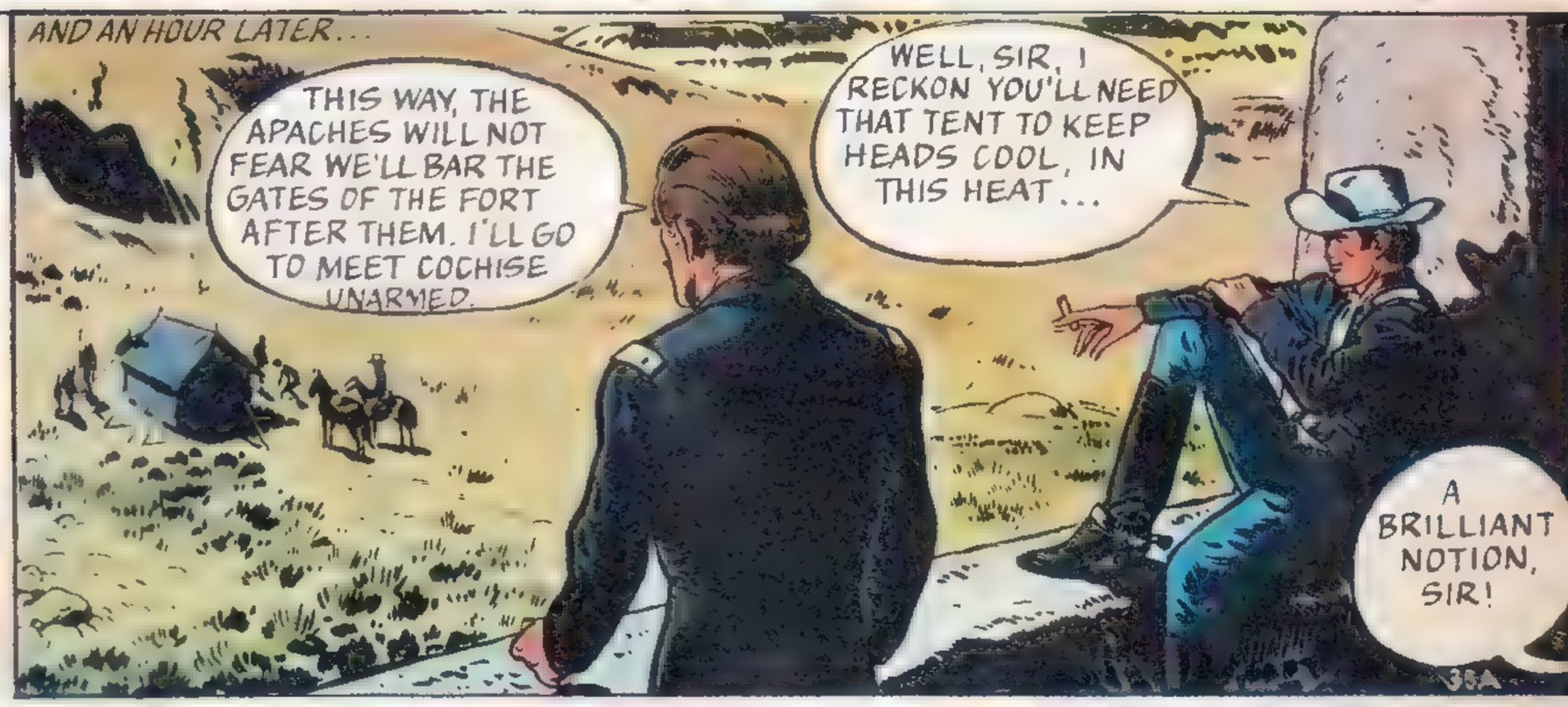
BLUEBERRY, GO BORROW A SHEET FROM MY DAUGHTER ... HOIST IT ABOVE THE GATES...

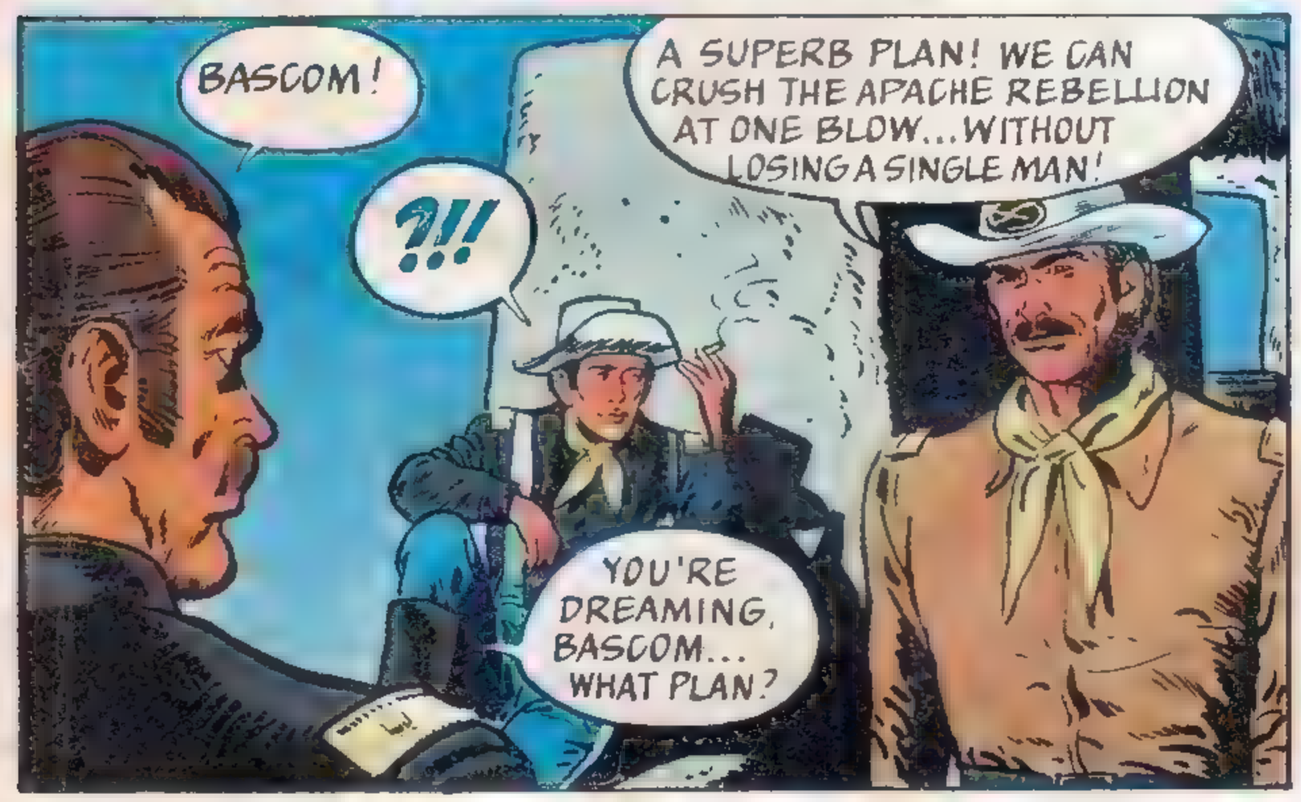
AT DAWN NEXT MORNING...

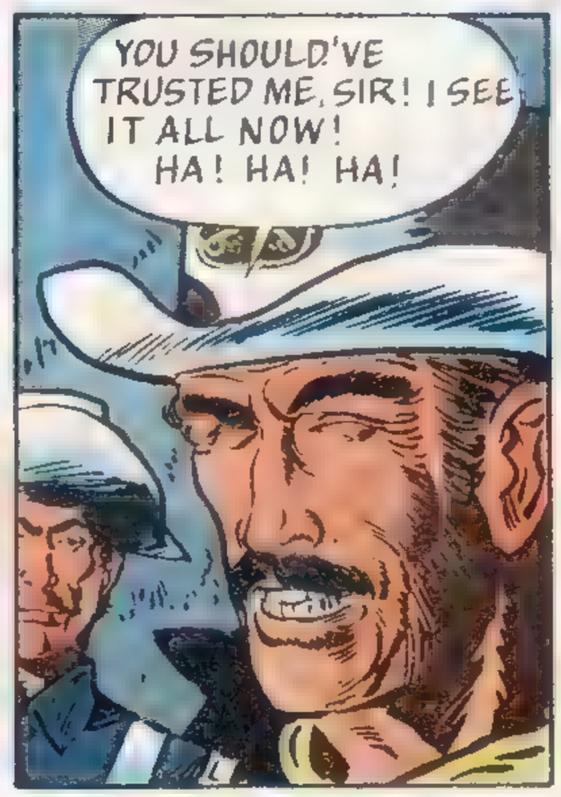

THE SAME DAY, SOMEWHERE ON THE CREST OF THE SIERRA OVERLOOKING FORT NAVAJO...

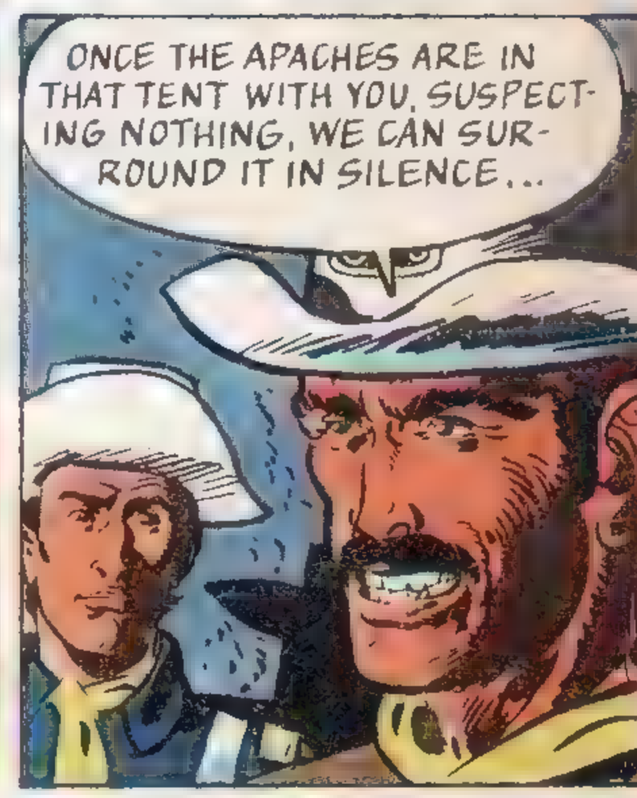

UGH! THE BLUECOATS AGREE TO HOLD POW-WOW! THE PALEFACE CHIEF GIVES HIS WORD!

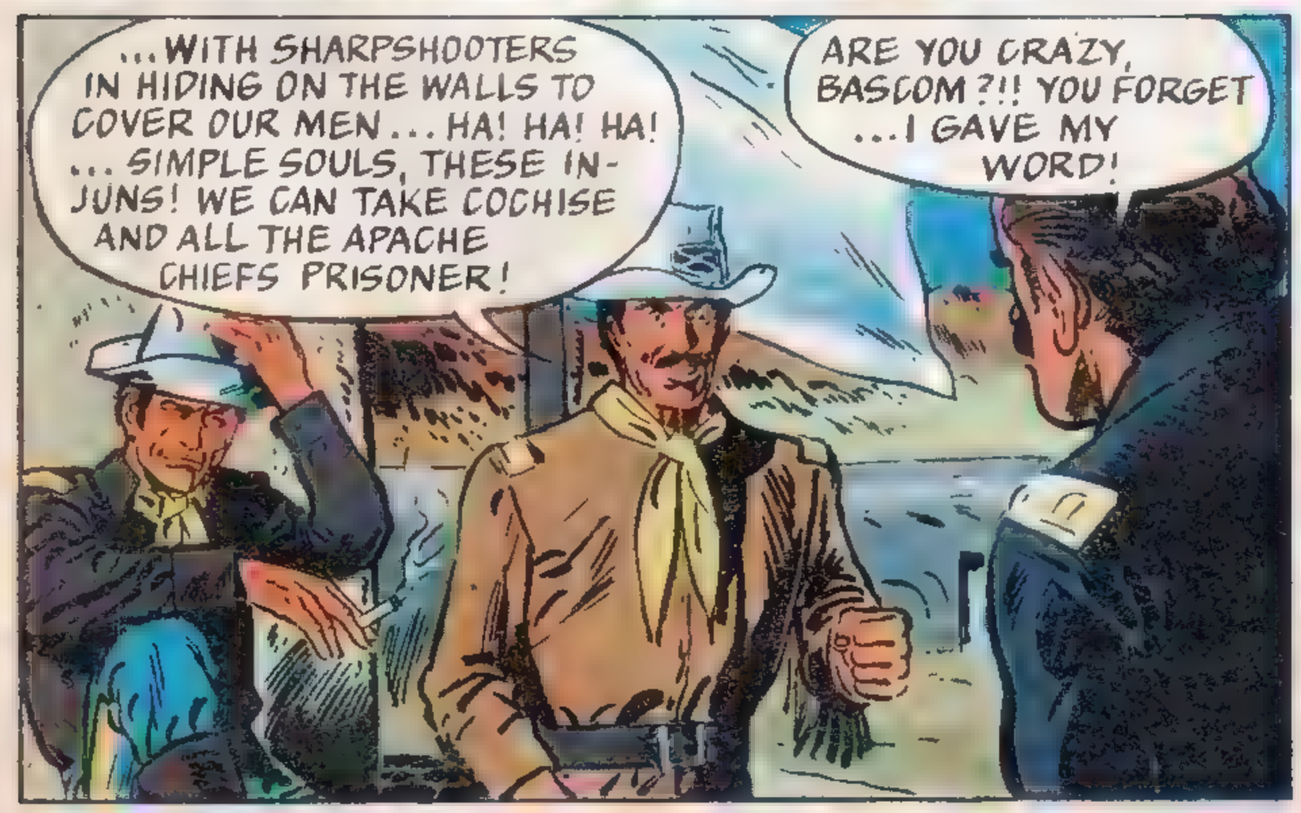

MEANWHILE...
I WANT COCHISE AND HIS MEN TO TRUST US...PITCH A TENT OUTSIDE THE ENCLOSURE!
YES, SIR!

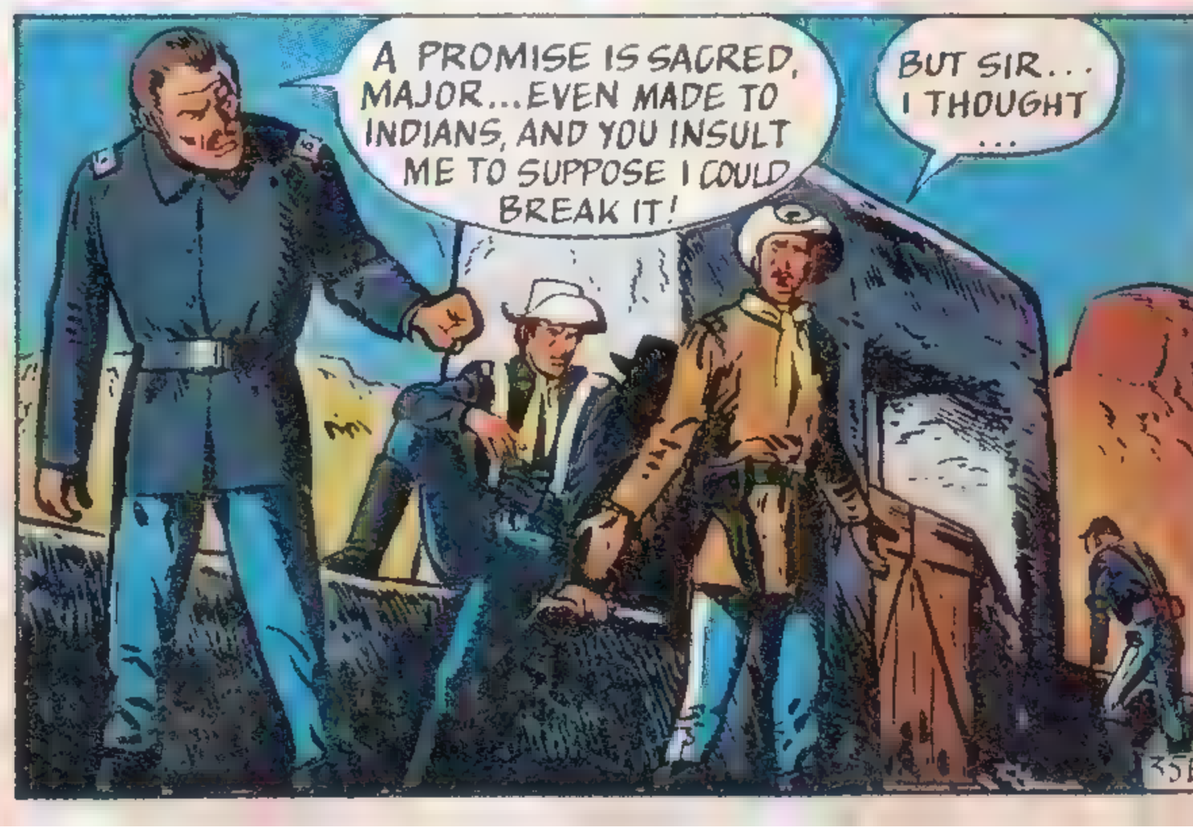

AND AN HOUR LATER...
THIS WAY, THE APACHES WILL NOT FEAR WE'LL BAR THE GATES OF THE FORT AFTER THEM. I'LL GO TO MEET COCHISE UNARMED.
WELL, SIR, I RECKON YOU'LL NEED THAT TENT TO KEEP HEADS COOL, IN THIS HEAT...
A BRILLIANT NOTION, SIR!
35A


BASCOM!
?!!
A SUPERB PLAN! WE CAN CRUSH THE APACHE REBELLION AT ONE BLOW...WITHOUT LOSING A SINGLE MAN!
YOU'RE DREAMING, BASCOM... WHAT PLAN?


YOU SHOULD'VE TRUSTED ME, SIR! I SEE IT ALL NOW! HA! HA! HA!


ONCE THE APACHES ARE IN THAT TENT WITH YOU, SUSPECTING NOTHING, WE CAN SURROUND IT IN SILENCE...


...WITH SHARPSHOOTERS IN HIDING ON THE WALLS TO COVER OUR MEN... HA! HA! HA! ... SIMPLE SOULS, THESE INJUNS! WE CAN TAKE COCHISE AND ALL THE APACHE CHIEFS PRISONER!
ARE YOU CRAZY, BASCOM?!! YOU FORGET ...I GAVE MY WORD!


A PROMISE IS SACRED, MAJOR...EVEN MADE TO INDIANS, AND YOU INSULT ME TO SUPPOSE I COULD BREAK IT!
BUT SIR... I THOUGHT ...
35B

THINK AGAIN, SIR! WE'LL NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE TO TAKE ALL THE APACHE CHIEFS AT ONCE!

THAT'S ENOUGH BASCOM! YOUR SUGGESTION IS UNWORTHY OF A GENTLEMAN AND I FORBID YOU TO MENTION IT AGAIN... COME ALONG, BLUEBERRY; LET'S JOIN CRAIG!

OLD FOOL! LETTING AN OPPORTUNITY LIKE THIS SLIP! HELL... I CAN'T EXPECT ANY ACTION FROM HIM... NOR PROMOTION!

ER... BASCOM'S A FINE OFFICER, BLUEBERRY... BUT AMBITIOUS, JEALOUS... AND EMBITTERED!

HMM!

HE CAME WEST HOPING TO MAKE HIS NAME FIGHTING REDSKINS AND GET QUICK PROMOTION!

HE HATES THE INDIANS LIKE POISON, AND...

CAREFUL, SIR... THIS LONG GRASS HERE...

36A

...IS JUST THE PLACE FOR RATTLERS!

OH, WE'RE NEARLY OUT OF IT ... WHAT'S THAT?

OUCH! DAMNATION!

BITTEN... BLUEBERRY.. I'VE BEEN BITTEN!

A RATTLER*! GOT IT!

POW!

*RATTLESNAKE, COMMON IN THE DESERTS OF ARIZONA AND NEW MEXICO. IT'S BITE IS OFTEN FATAL.

I'M FINISHED, BLUEBERRY! THE VENOM WILL KILL ME! GET MY DAUGHTER AND SISTER, AND MAJOR BASCOM!

36B

THERE MAY STILL BE HOPE, SIR... I'LL SUCK THE VENOM FROM THE WOUND!

YOU'RE CRAZY ...YOU'LL BE POISONED! WAIT! HERE COMES HELP!

THIS IS DREADFUL!

DON'T JUST STAND THERE, CRAIG... HELP ME CAUTERIZE THE WOUND, WITH POWDER FROM THIS CARTRIDGE

THIS'LL HURT, SIR, BUT IT'S YOUR ONLY CHANCE!

GO AHEAD, BLUEBERRY! GIVE ME SOMETHING TO BITE ON, CRAIG!

AAAARGH

QUICK... GET THE COLONEL BACK TO THE FORT!

YESSIR! LIEUTENANT CROWE KNOWS SOME GOOD INDIAN REMEDIES!

37 A

QUARTER OF AN HOUR LATER...

OH MY GOD, HOW DREADFUL!

WE CAN ONLY WAIT AND HOPE NOW, SIR! THIS HERB POULTICE WILL SOON ACT... BUT YOU'LL BE DELIRIOUS FOR SOME DAYS. IT'S THE BEST I CAN DO.

A CATASTROPHE... I... MUST MAKE ARRANGEMENTS!

B... BASCOM! YOU... YOU'RE THE HIGHEST-RANKING OFFICER... YOU TAKE OVER COMMAND OF... OF THE FORT!

YOU CAN RELY ON ME, SIR!

BUT SUDDENLY...

THE TRUMPET... SOUNDING THE ALARM! LEAVE ME... GET TO YOUR POSTS!

THE HERBS ARE BEGINNING TO WORK!

WHAT'S UP NOW, SERGEANT?

OVER THERE, SIR! THE APACHE DELEGATION COMING IN SIGHT!

SURE ENOUGH, PRECEDED BY A WHITE FLAG AND ESCORTED AT A DISTANCE BY HIS WARRIORS, COCHISE IS SLOWLY ADVANCING TOWARDS THE FORT WITH THE TRIBAL CHIEFS.

GIR.

LET THE WARRIORS WAIT AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN, WHILE WE GO ON, UNARMED, TO THE TEPEE* OF THE BLUECOATS

*INDIAN WORD FOR TENT.

HA! HA! HA! I'M IN LUCK...GETTING COMMAND JUST AS THIS SCUM TURNS UP AT FORT NAVAJO!

38A

BLUEBERRY! TAKE A HORSE AND GO TO MEET THE APACHE CHIEFS, WITH A TRUMPETER CARRYING A WHITE FLAG. AND TAKE CROWE TO INTERPRET!

YES SIR!

A FEW MOMENTS LATER...

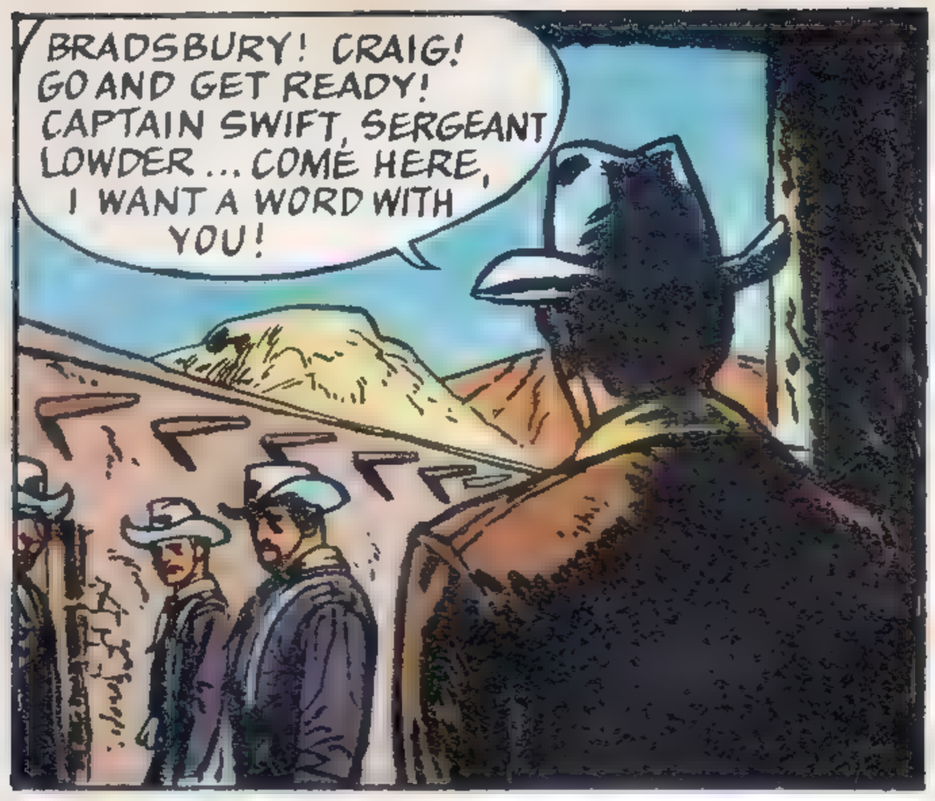
AND NO WEAPONS, MIND! INVITE COCHISE AND THE OTHERS INTO THE TENT. I'LL JOIN YOU, ALONG WITH CRAIG AND CAPTAIN BRADSBURY. GOOD LUCK!

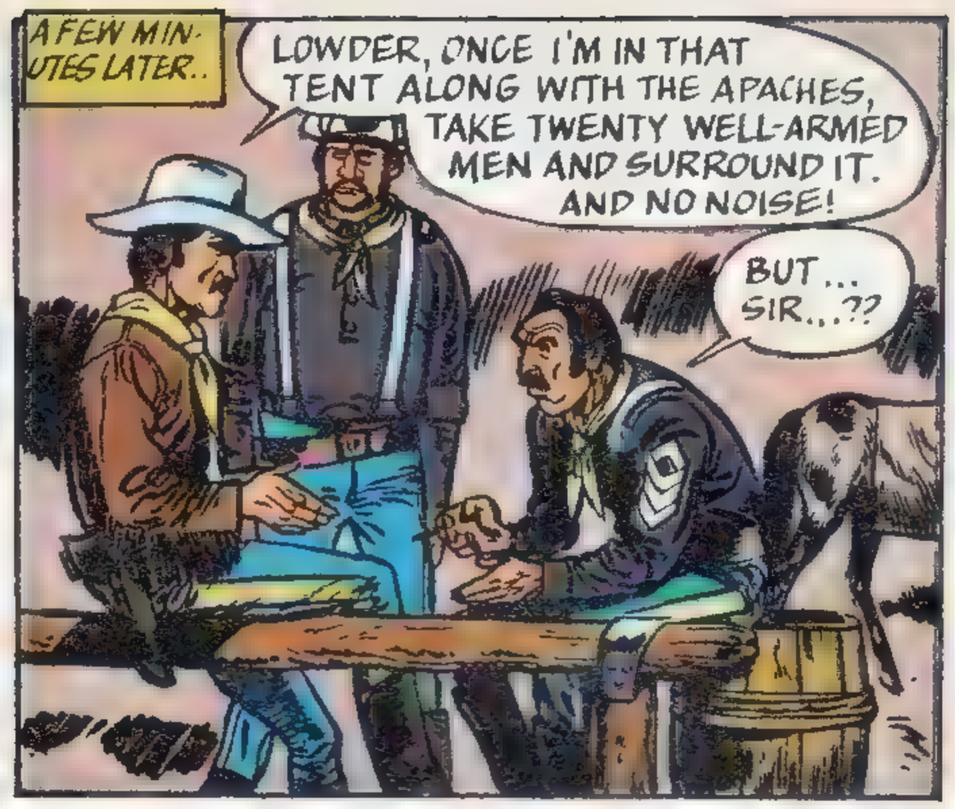
DAMNED IF I EVER EXPECTED HE'D TALK TO COCHISE... STRANGE...

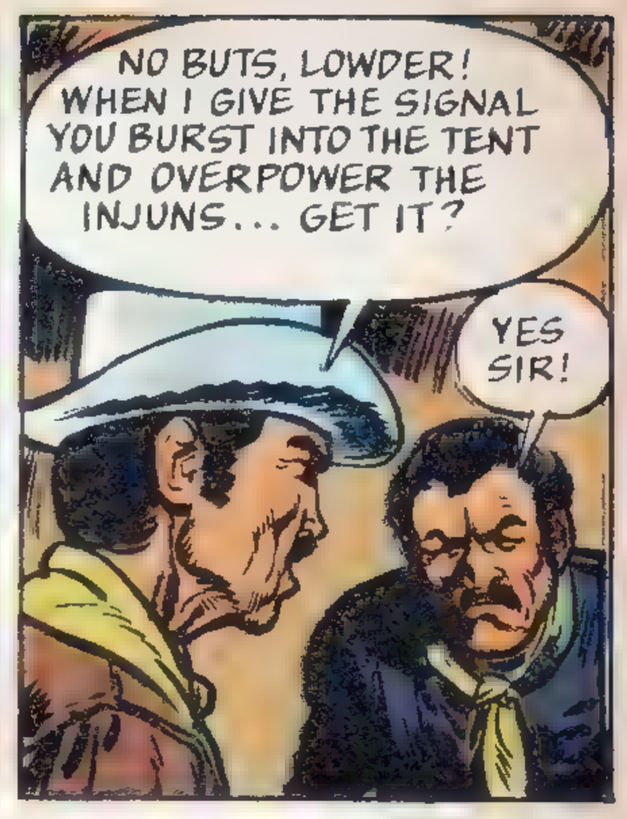
THERE'S SOMETHING UP FOR SURE, BLUEBERRY... HE CAN'T ABIDE REDSKINS!

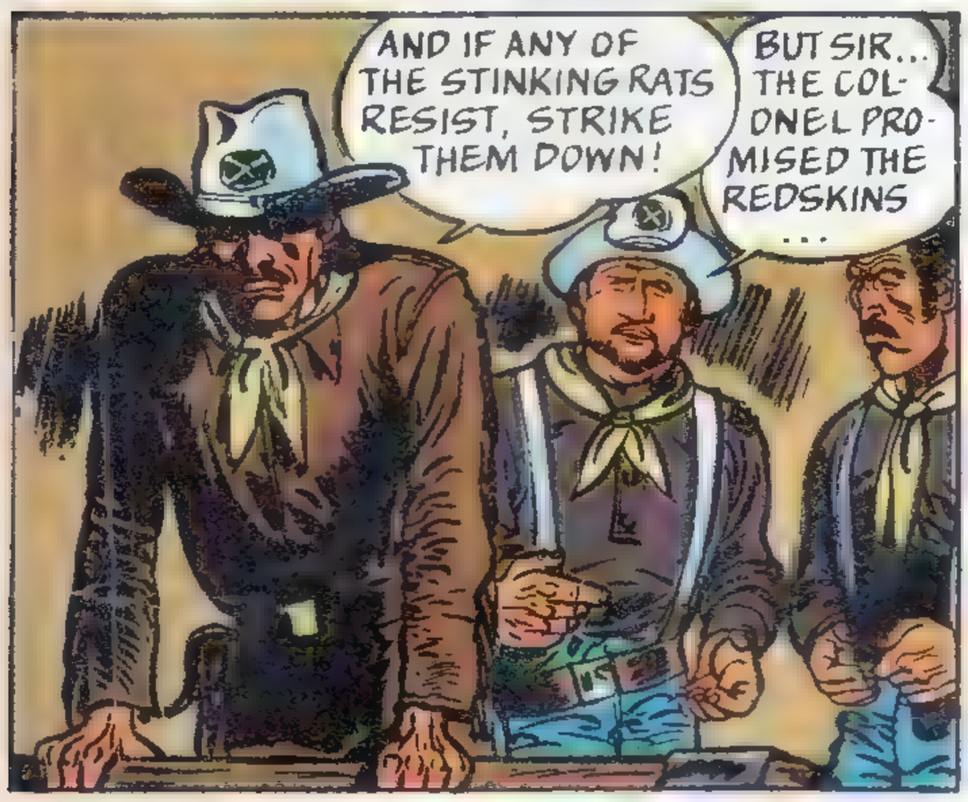
PHEW... THAT GETS RID OF THE TWO WORST OF THEM... NOW TO GET THE LOYAL OFFICERS AND FIX MY LITTLE TRAP!

38D

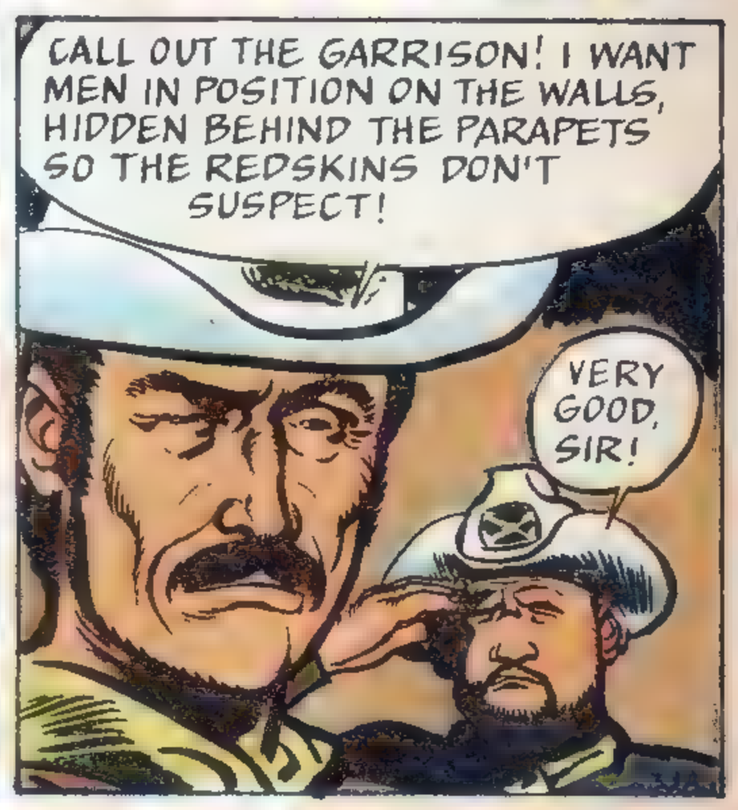

BRADSBURY! CRAIG! GO AND GET READY! CAPTAIN SWIFT, SERGEANT LOWDER... COME HERE, I WANT A WORD WITH YOU!

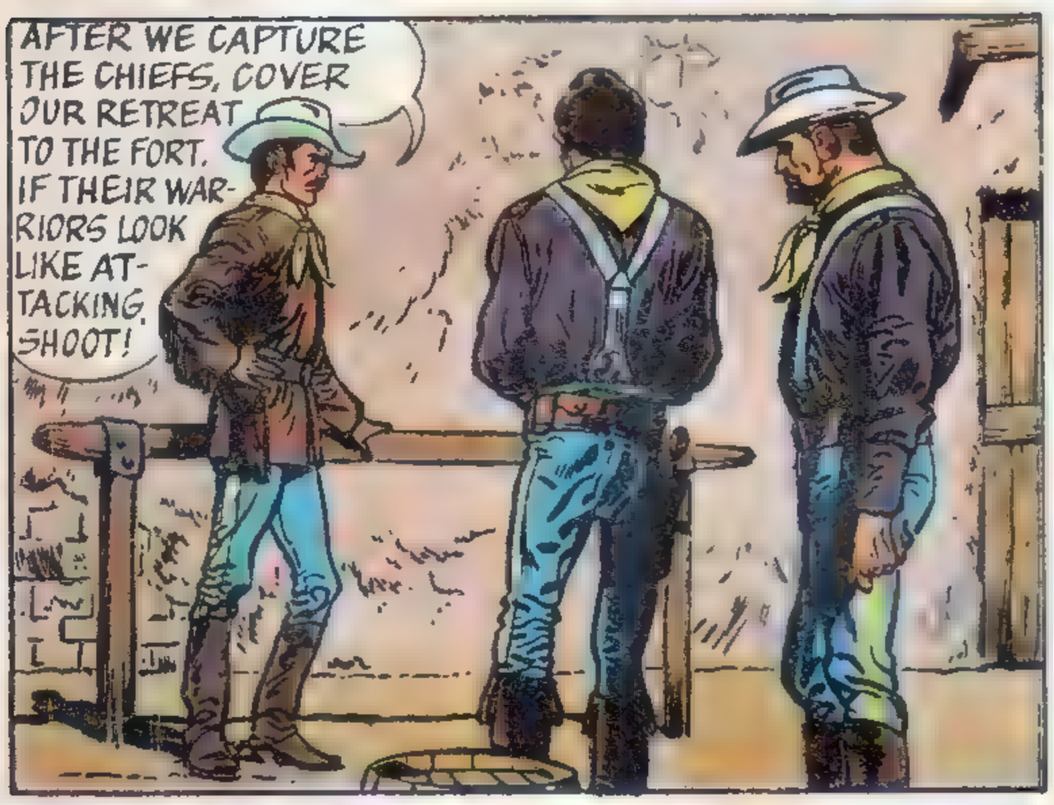

A FEW MINUTES LATER..
LOWDER, ONCE I'M IN THAT TENT ALONG WITH THE APACHES, TAKE TWENTY WELL-ARMED MEN AND SURROUND IT. AND NO NOISE!
BUT... SIR...??

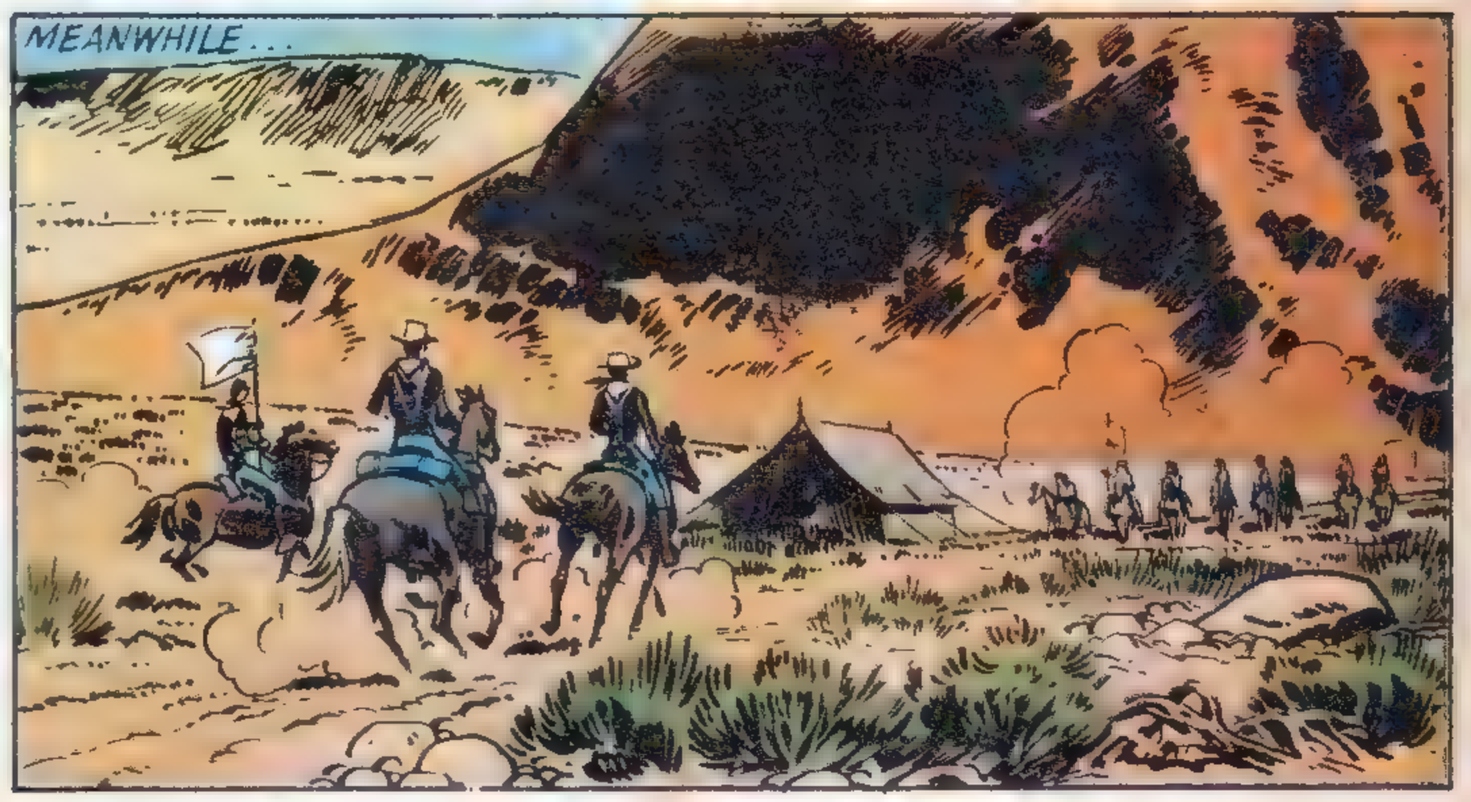

NO BUTS, LOWDER! WHEN I GIVE THE SIGNAL YOU BURST INTO THE TENT AND OVERPOWER THE INJUNS... GET IT?
YES SIR!

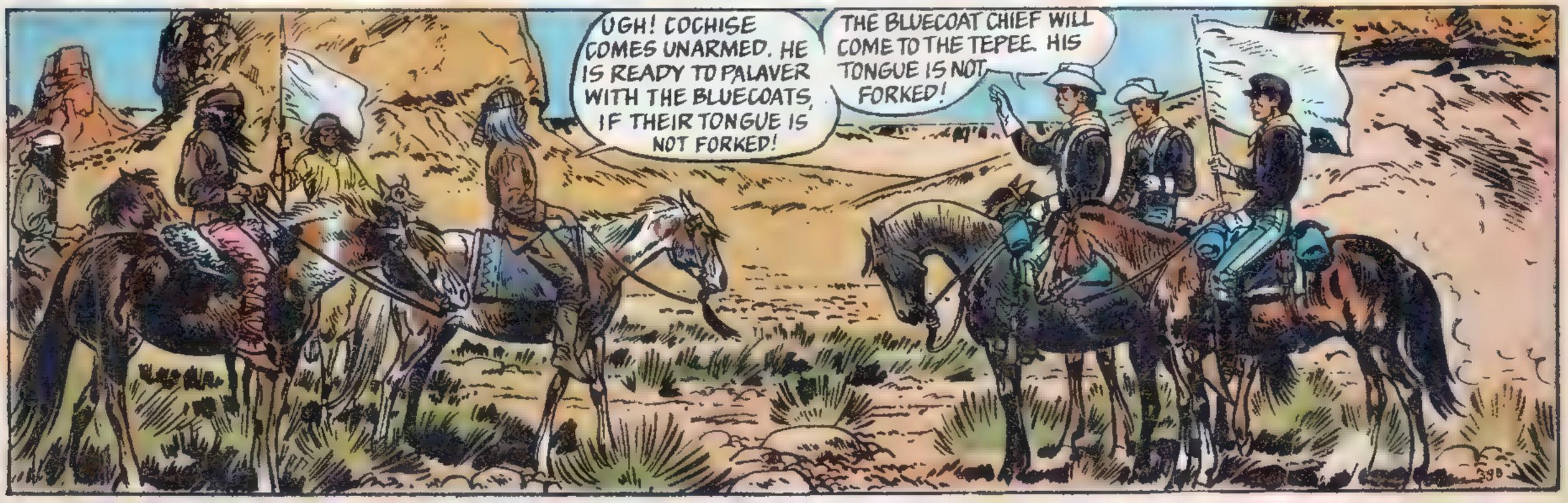

AND IF ANY OF THE STINKING RATS RESIST, STRIKE THEM DOWN!
BUT SIR... THE COLONEL PROMISED THE REDSKINS ...

SWIFT, IT WAS THE COLONEL MADE RASH PROMISES TO THE INJUNS, NOT ME! AND RIGHT NOW I'M IN COMMAND!


CALL OUT THE GARRISON! I WANT MEN IN POSITION ON THE WALLS, HIDDEN BEHIND THE PARAPETS SO THE REDSKINS DON'T SUSPECT!
VERY GOOD, SIR!


AFTER WE CAPTURE THE CHIEFS, COVER OUR RETREAT TO THE FORT. IF THEIR WARRIORS LOOK LIKE ATTACKING, SHOOT!


MEANWHILE...


UGH! COCHISE COMES UNARMED. HE IS READY TO PALAVER WITH THE BLUECOATS, IF THEIR TONGUE IS NOT FORKED!
THE BLUECOAT CHIEF WILL COME TO THE TEPEE. HIS TONGUE IS NOT FORKED!

INSIDE THE FORT...

GET IN POSITION! KEEP BEHIND THE PARAPET! TEN DAYS IN THE CELLS FOR ANYONE SHOWING HIMSELF! GET A MOVE ON!

?? WHAT'S UP? THEY'RE CLEARING THE DECKS FOR ACTION!

ONLY A PRECAUTION, CRAIG. I DON'T TRUST THOSE INJUNS! LET'S GET GOING!

SOON...

HA! I'M ARMED WITH THIS DERRINGER*, SEE? SMALL BUT DEADLY...AND I HAVE ITS TWIN BROTHER UNDER MY TUNIC!

*DERRINGER: SMALL LARGE-BORE PISTOL.

BUT SIR... WE PROMISED THE INDIANS WE...

WOULD YOU KEEP A PROMISE MADE TO A DOG? HERE, STICK THIS IN YOUR BOOT!

TEN MINUTES LATER...

COCHISE GREETS THE BLUECOAT CHIEF! HE COMES WITH THE CHIEFS WHO RULE FROM THE RIO GRANDE TO THE GILA RIVER. ASKING JUSTICE FOR HIS PEOPLE!

TRANSLATE FOR ME, CROWE! TELL HIM HE'S WELCOME, AND I INVITE HIM TO PALAVER IN MY TEPEE!

YES SIR!

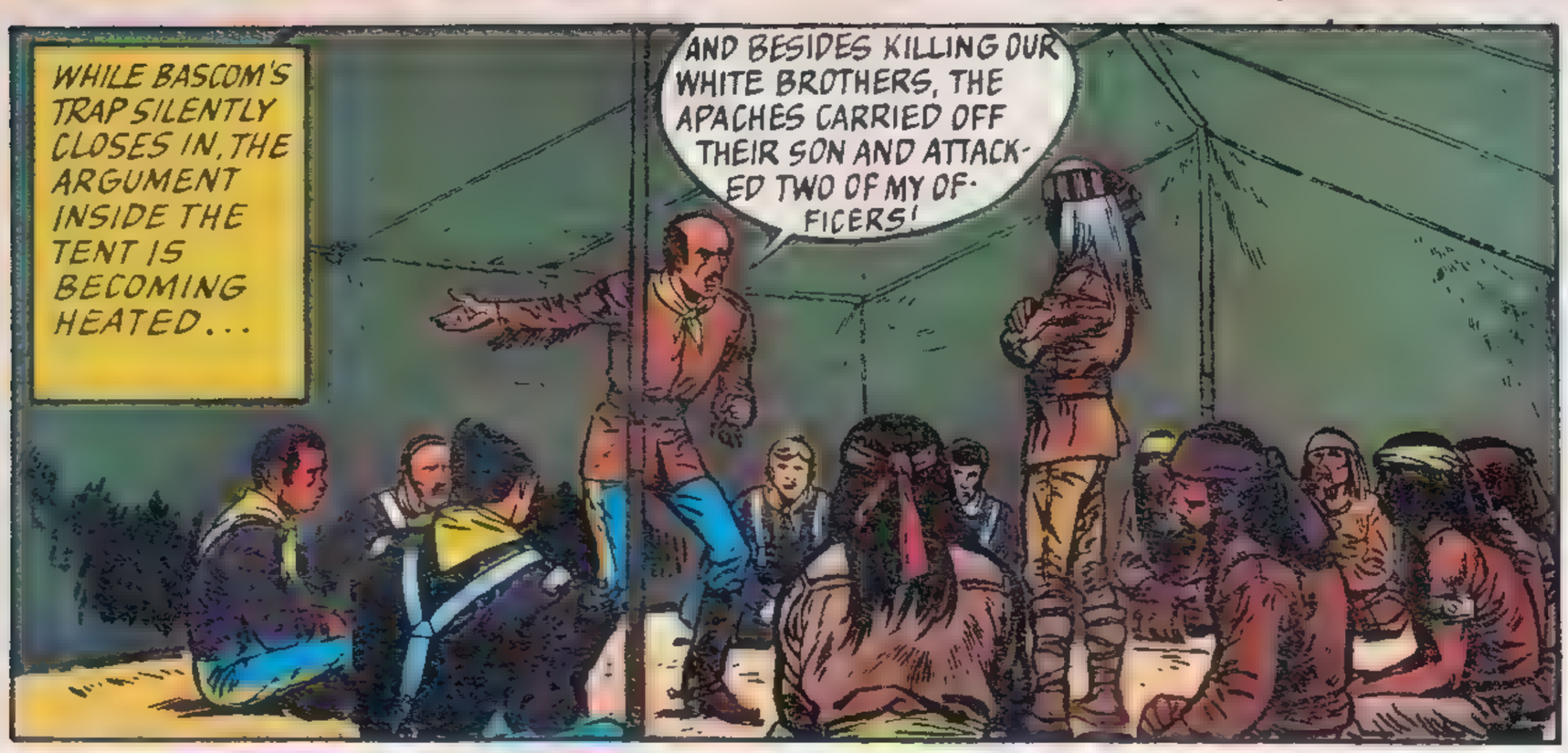
AND SOON...

THE BLUECOATS HAVE ATTACKED PEACEFUL INDIANS MOVING CAMP. THEY HAVE KILLED GREY WOLF AND SEVERAL WARRIORS, WITH THEIR SQUAWS AND PAPOOSES!

THE BLUECOATS WERE AVENGING THEIR WHITE BROTHERS MURDERED BY THE APACHES!

MEANWHILE...

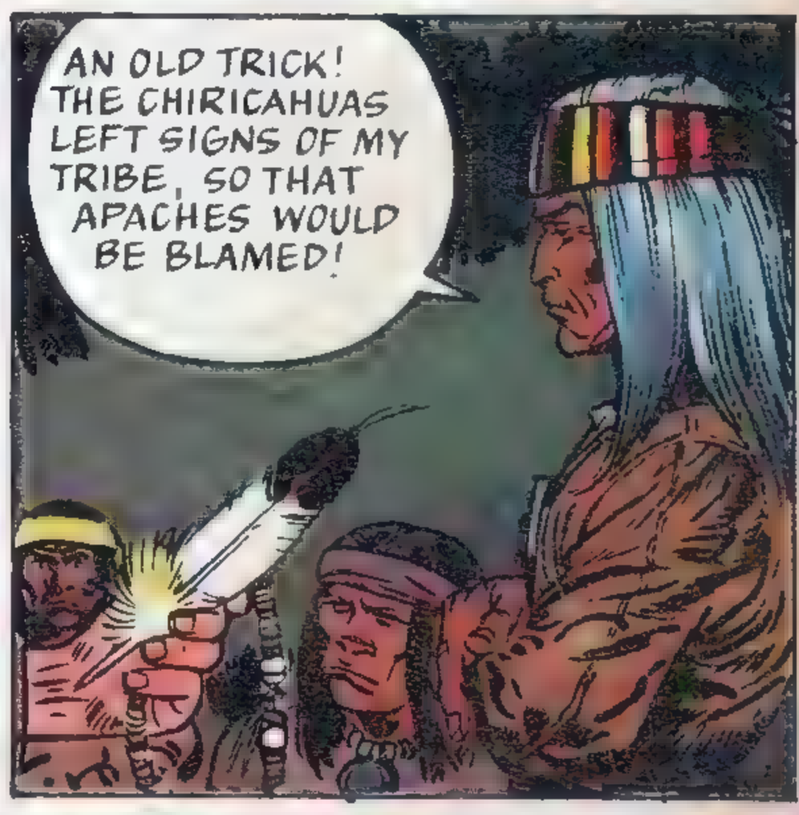
NO NOISE... NOT A WORD... HAVE YOUR WEAPONS READY, TAKE YOUR BOOTS OFF! THE LEAST SOUND COULD ALERT 'EM!

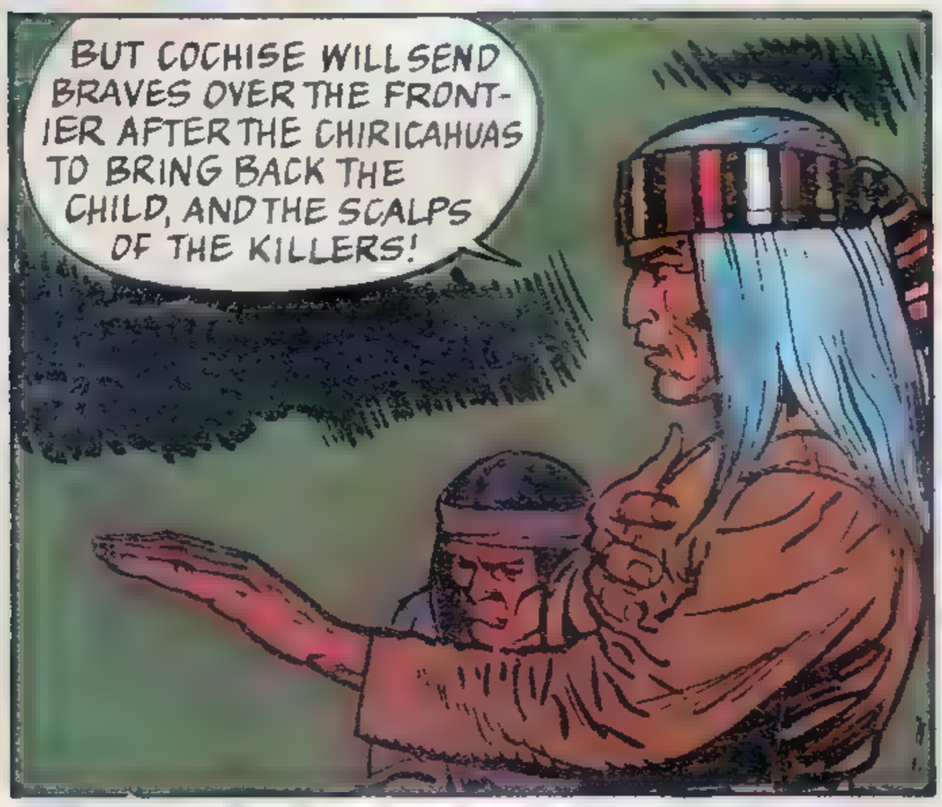

WHILE BASCOM'S TRAP SILENTLY CLOSES IN, THE ARGUMENT INSIDE THE TENT IS BECOMING HEATED...
AND BESIDES KILLING OUR WHITE BROTHERS, THE APACHES CARRIED OFF THEIR SON AND ATTACKED TWO OF MY OFFICERS!

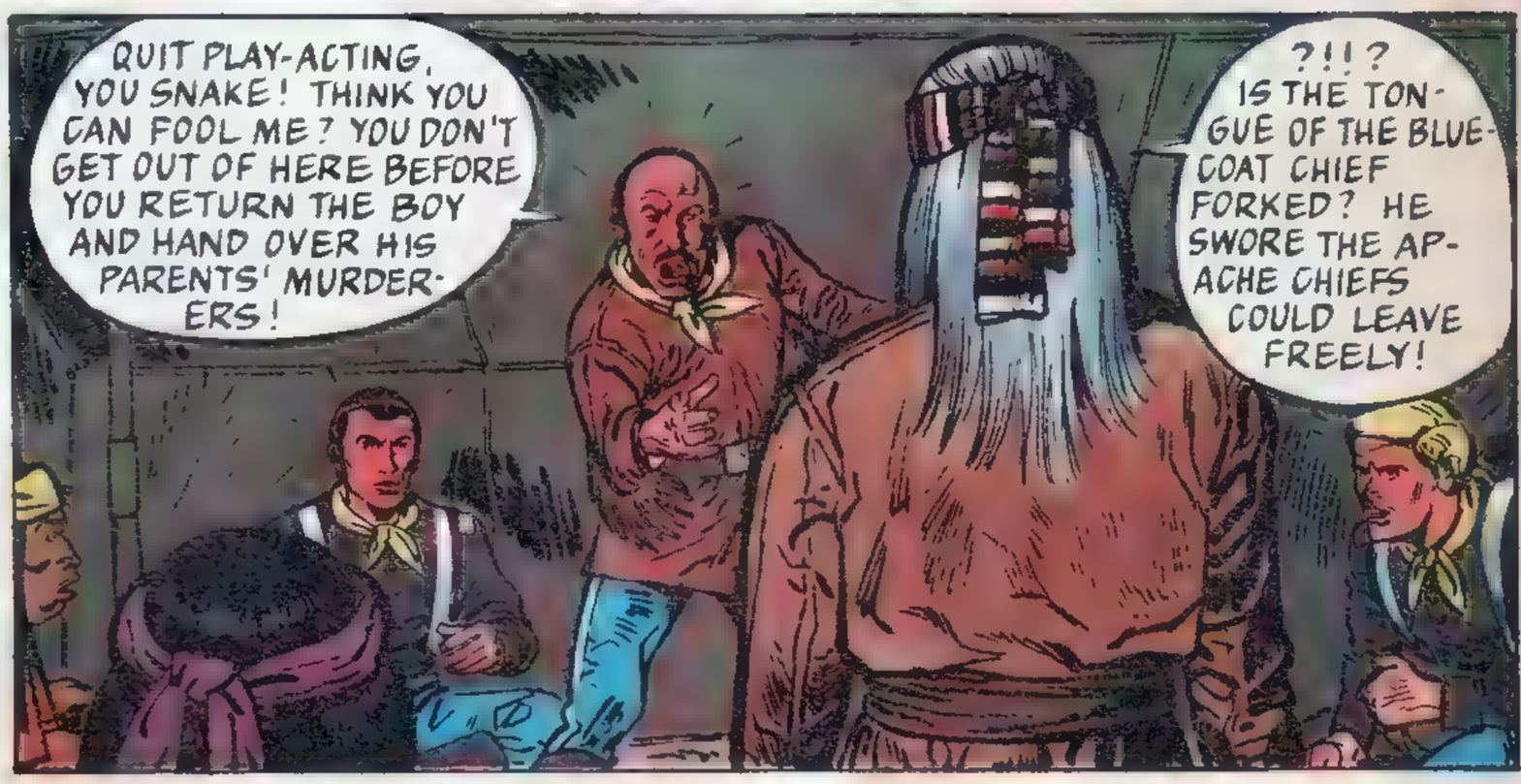
THE BLUECOAT CHIEF IS MISTAKEN! COCHISE HAS QUESTIONED HIS BROTHERS. APACHES ARE NOT GUILTY! CHIRICAHUAS FROM MEXICO ATTACKED THE PALEFACES.

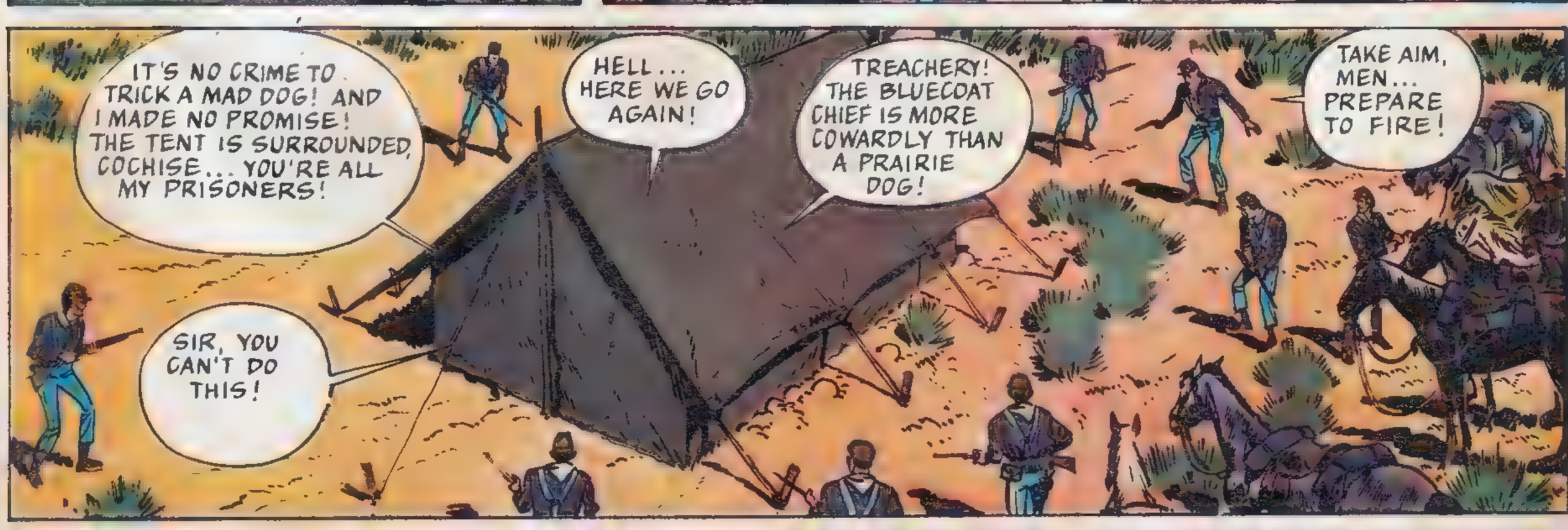
COCHISE SEEMS TO MEAN IT BLUEBERRY... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK!

SO HOW ABOUT THESE FEATHERS AND BEADS? APACHE, EH? MY MEN FOUND 'EM AT THE STANTON RANCH!


AN OLD TRICK! THE CHIRICAHUAS LEFT SIGNS OF MY TRIBE, SO THAT APACHES WOULD BE BLAMED!


BUT COCHISE WILL SEND BRAVES OVER THE FRONTIER AFTER THE CHIRICAHUAS TO BRING BACK THE CHILD, AND THE SCALPS OF THE KILLERS!

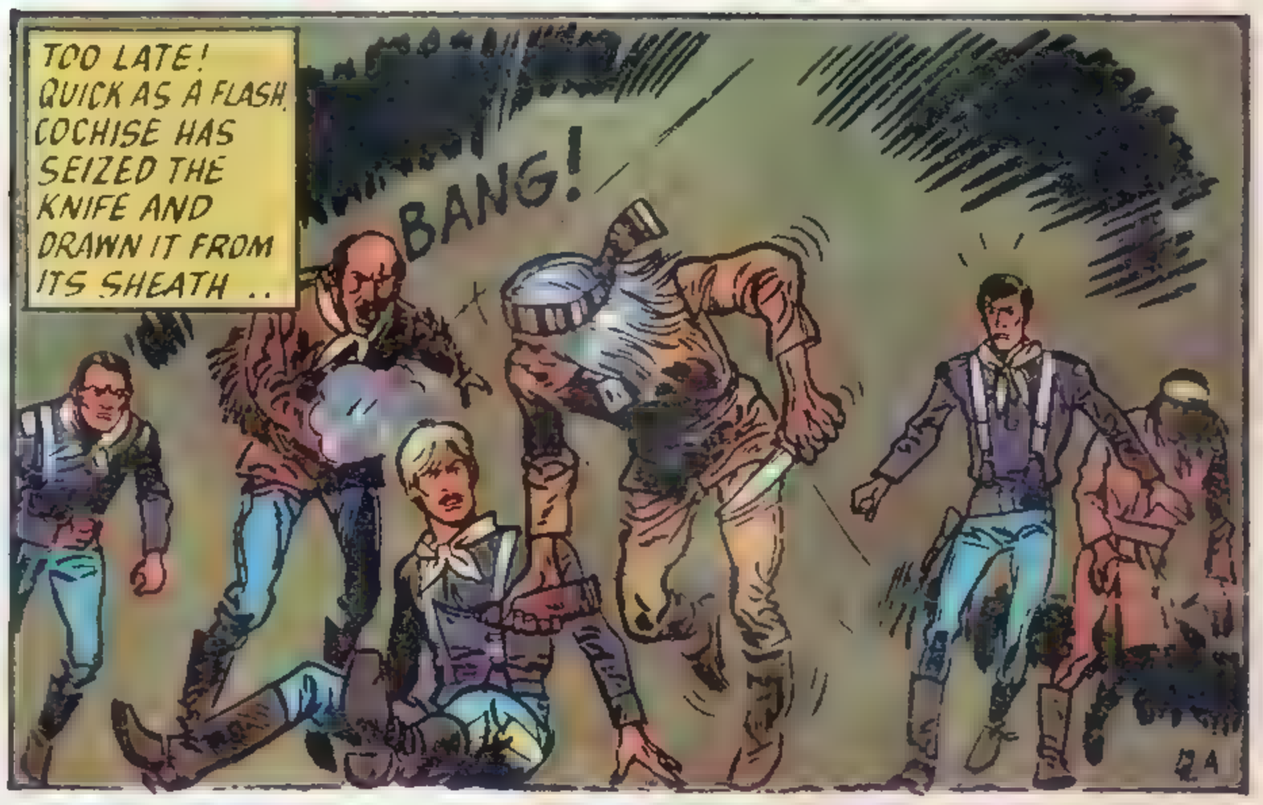

QUIT PLAY-ACTING, YOU SNAKE! THINK YOU CAN FOOL ME? YOU DON'T GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE YOU RETURN THE BOY AND HAND OVER HIS PARENTS' MURDERERS!
?!!? IS THE TONGUE OF THE BLUECOAT CHIEF FORKED? HE SWORE THE APACHE CHIEFS COULD LEAVE FREELY!

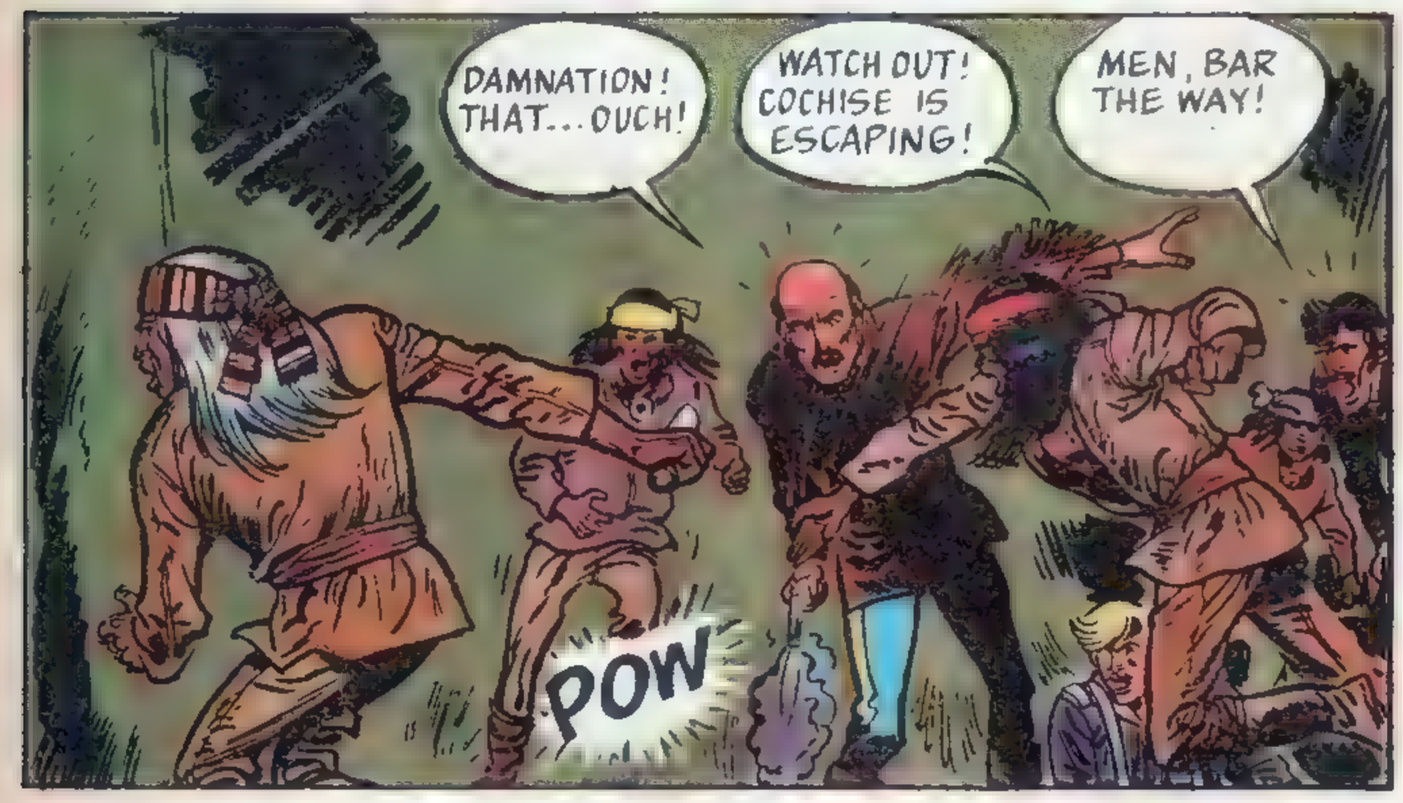

IT'S NO CRIME TO TRICK A MAD DOG! AND I MADE NO PROMISE! THE TENT IS SURROUNDED, COCHISE... YOU'RE ALL MY PRISONERS!
HELL... HERE WE GO AGAIN!
TREACHERY! THE BLUECOAT CHIEF IS MORE COWARDLY THAN A PRAIRIE DOG!
TAKE AIM, MEN... PREPARE TO FIRE!
SIR, YOU CAN'T DO THIS!

THE FIRST MAN TO MOVE DIES! TELL YOUR BROTHERS, COCHISE!
WE WERE TO COME UNARMED! THE BLUECOAT CHIEF IS A LIAR AND A COWARD!
SIR, I PROTEST! THIS ISN'T WORTHY OF US!

I BEG YOU, SIR! WE CAN'T SULLY OUR...
GET OUT OF THE WAY, CRAIG, YOU FOOL!

WATCH OUT! THE KNIFE!
THIS'LL CALM YOU DOWN... HELL, BRADSBURY! CALL THE MEN! QUICK!


TOO LATE! QUICK AS A FLASH, COCHISE HAS SEIZED THE KNIFE AND DRAWN IT FROM ITS SHEATH..
BANG!

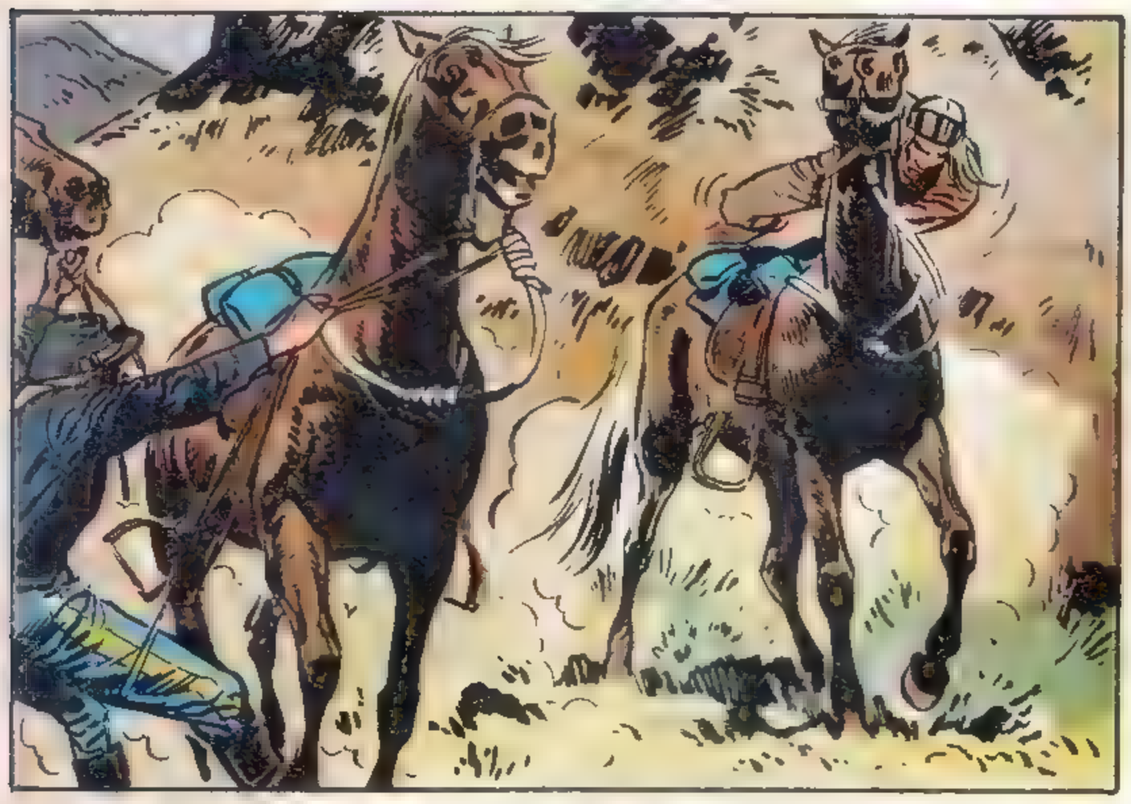

DAMNATION! THAT... OUCH!
WATCH OUT! COCHISE IS ESCAPING!
MEN, BAR THE WAY!
POW

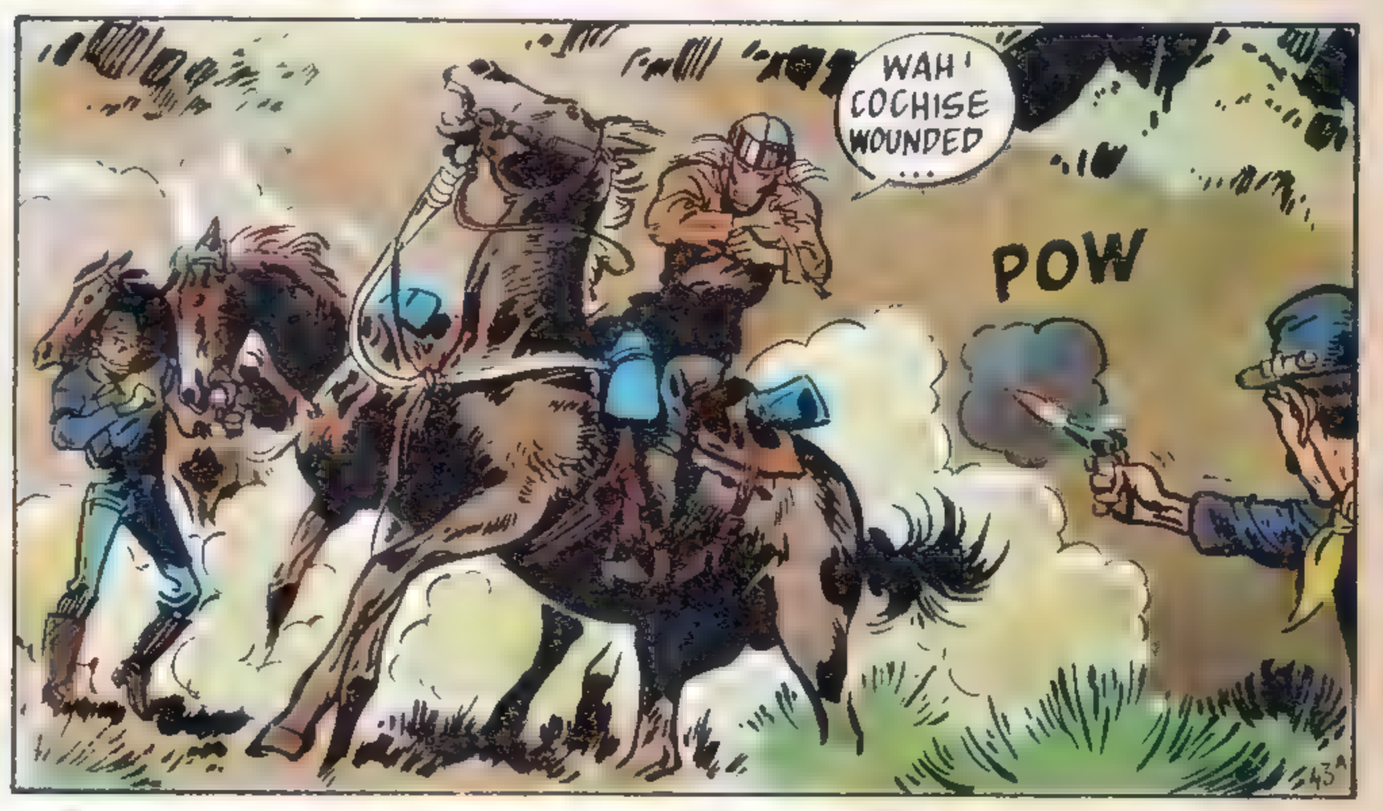
RIIIIIIIP
HE'S GETTING AWAY... ARGGH!

HEY... WATCH OUT!

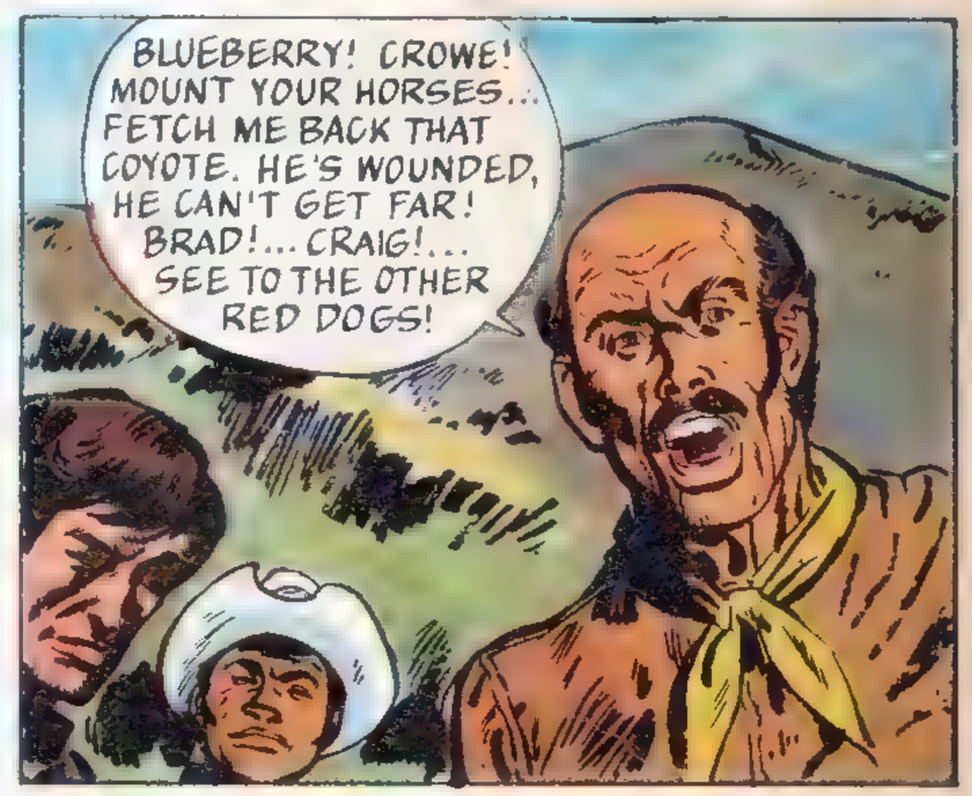
WHOOP POW!

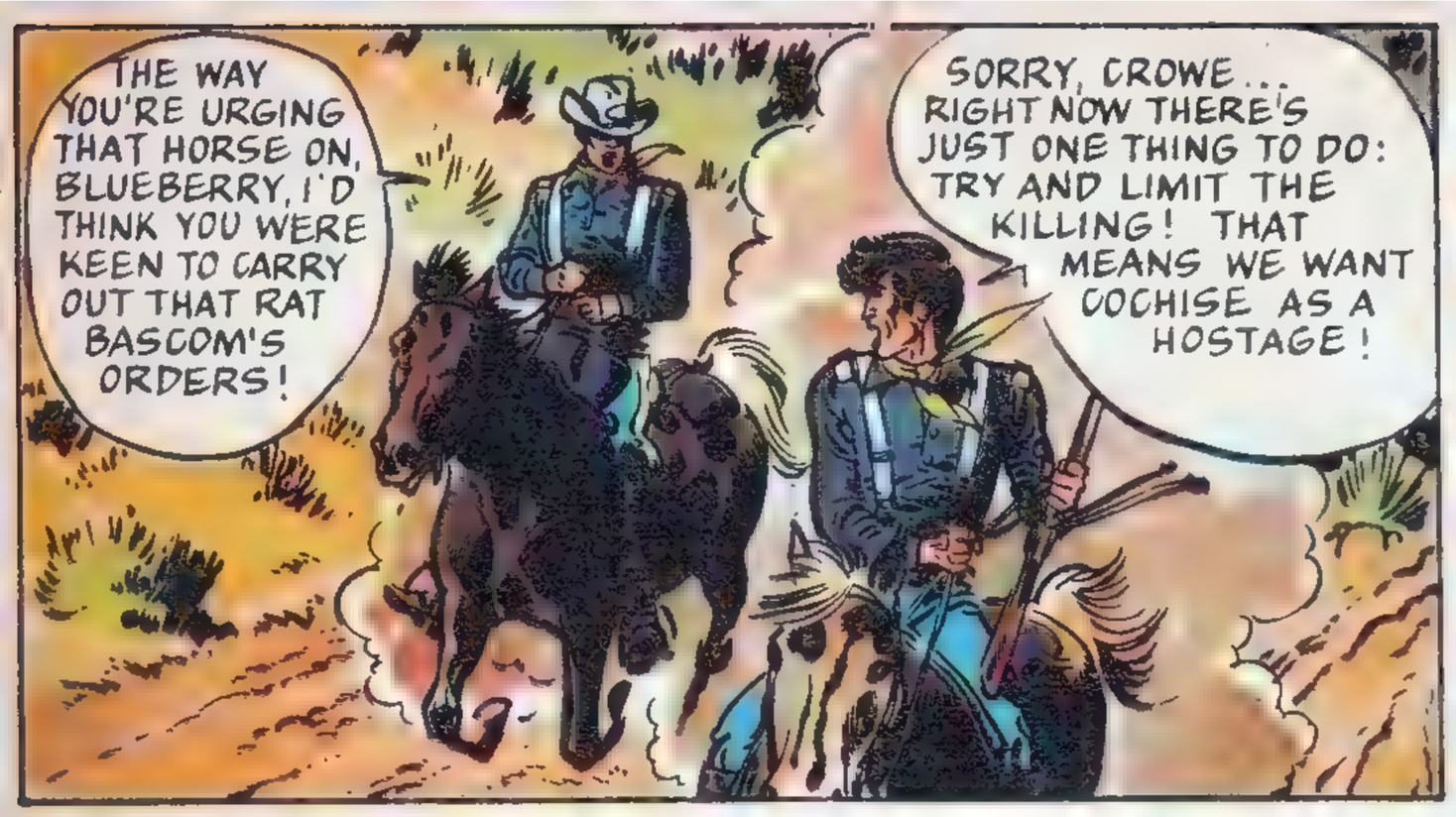
THERE GOES COCHISE! FIRE! FIRE!

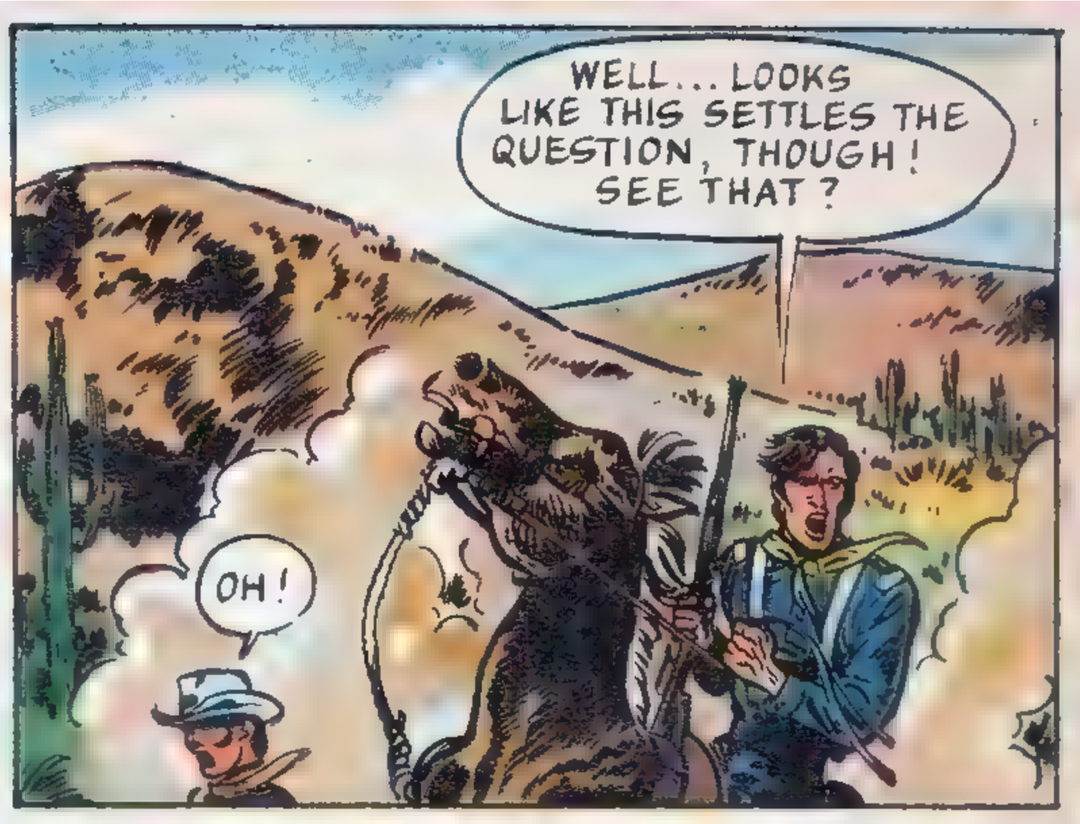


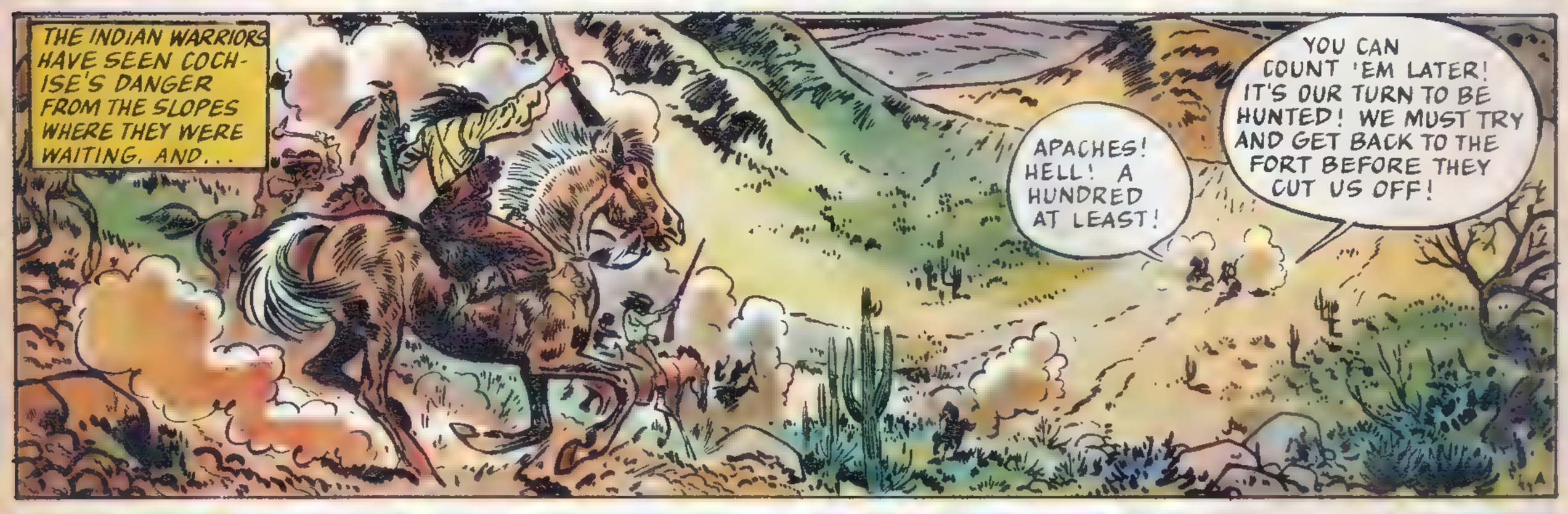

WAH! COCHISE WOUNDED ...
POW

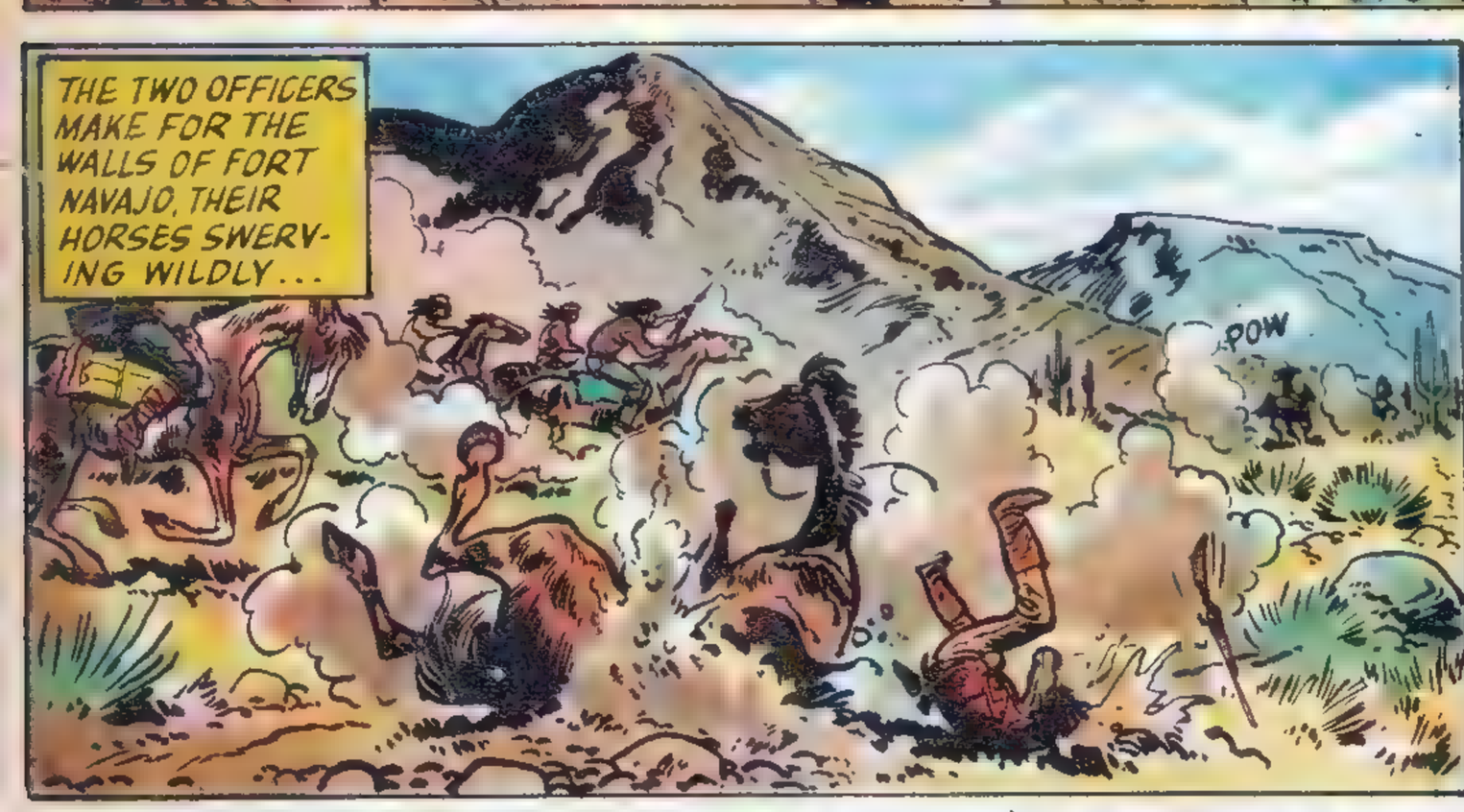
QUICK... GET HIM! I WANT THAT MAN DEAD OR ALIVE!
POW
POW

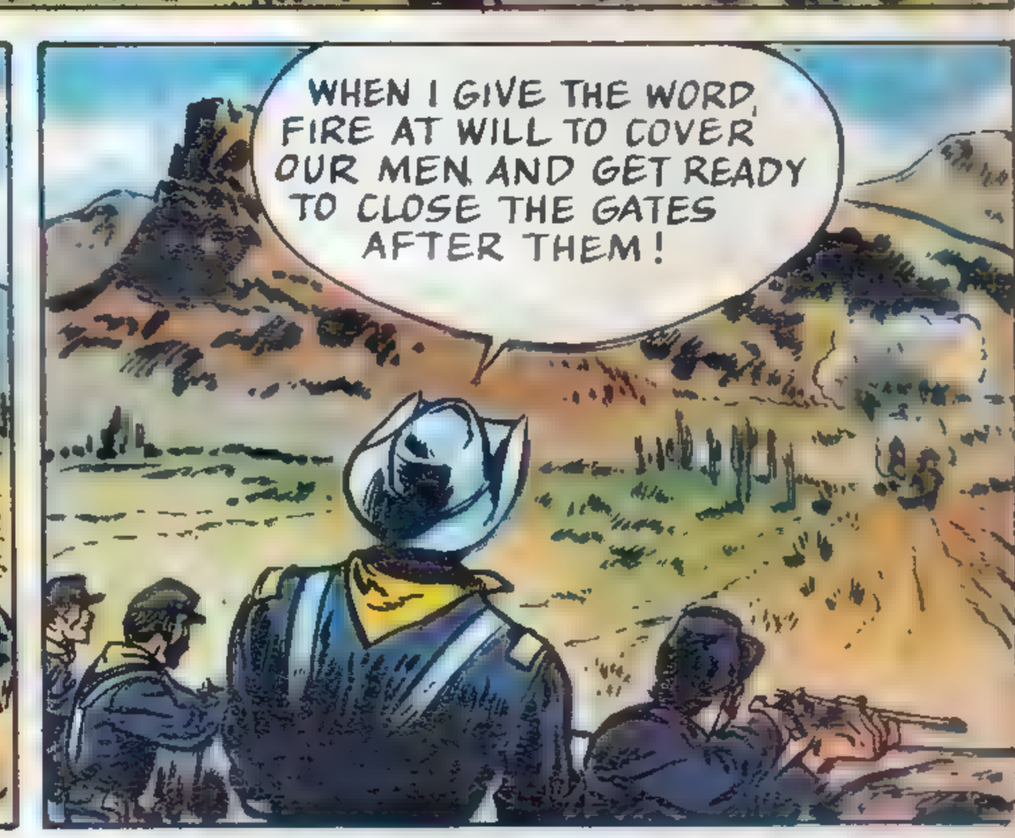

BLUEBERRY! CROWE! MOUNT YOUR HORSES... FETCH ME BACK THAT COYOTE. HE'S WOUNDED, HE CAN'T GET FAR! BRAD!... CRAIG!... SEE TO THE OTHER RED DOGS!

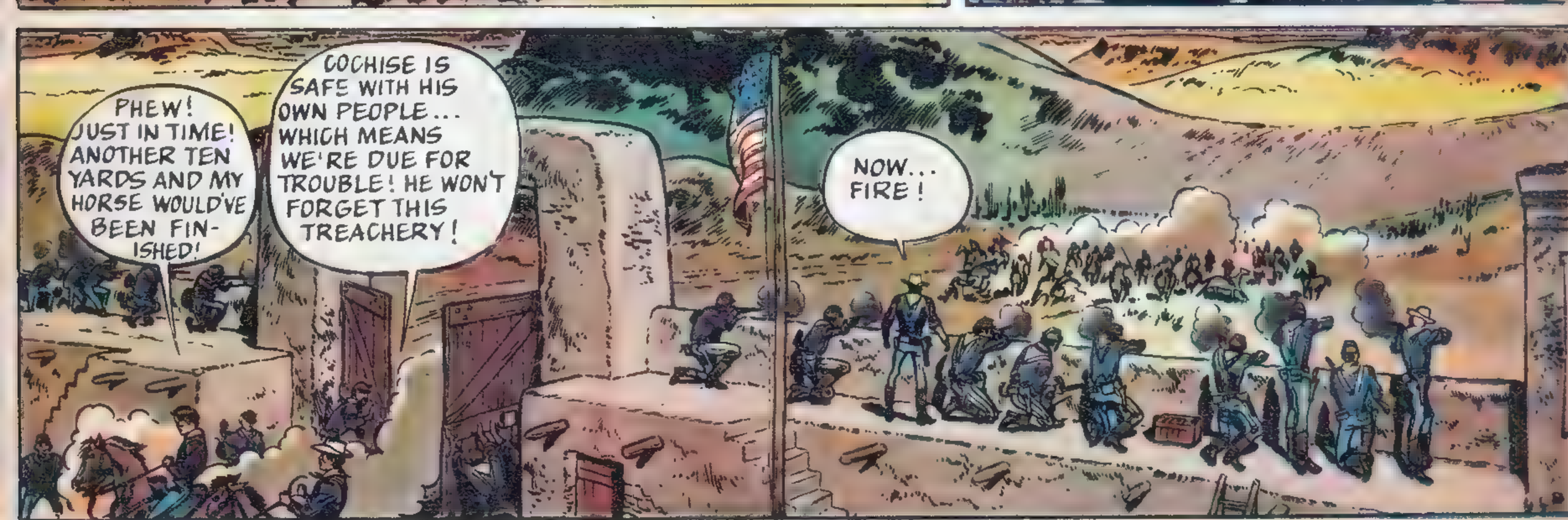

THE WAY YOU'RE URGING THAT HORSE ON, BLUEBERRY, I'D THINK YOU WERE KEEN TO CARRY OUT THAT RAT BASCOM'S ORDERS!
SORRY, CROWE... RIGHT NOW THERE'S JUST ONE THING TO DO: TRY AND LIMIT THE KILLING! THAT MEANS WE WANT COCHISE AS A HOSTAGE!


WELL... LOOKS LIKE THIS SETTLES THE QUESTION, THOUGH! SEE THAT?
OH!


THE INDIAN WARRIORS HAVE SEEN COCHISE'S DANGER FROM THE SLOPES WHERE THEY WERE WAITING, AND...
APACHES! HELL! A HUNDRED AT LEAST!
YOU CAN COUNT 'EM LATER! IT'S OUR TURN TO BE HUNTED! WE MUST TRY AND GET BACK TO THE FORT BEFORE THEY CUT US OFF!


THE TWO OFFICERS MAKE FOR THE WALLS OF FORT NAVAJO, THEIR HORSES SWERVING WILDLY...
POW

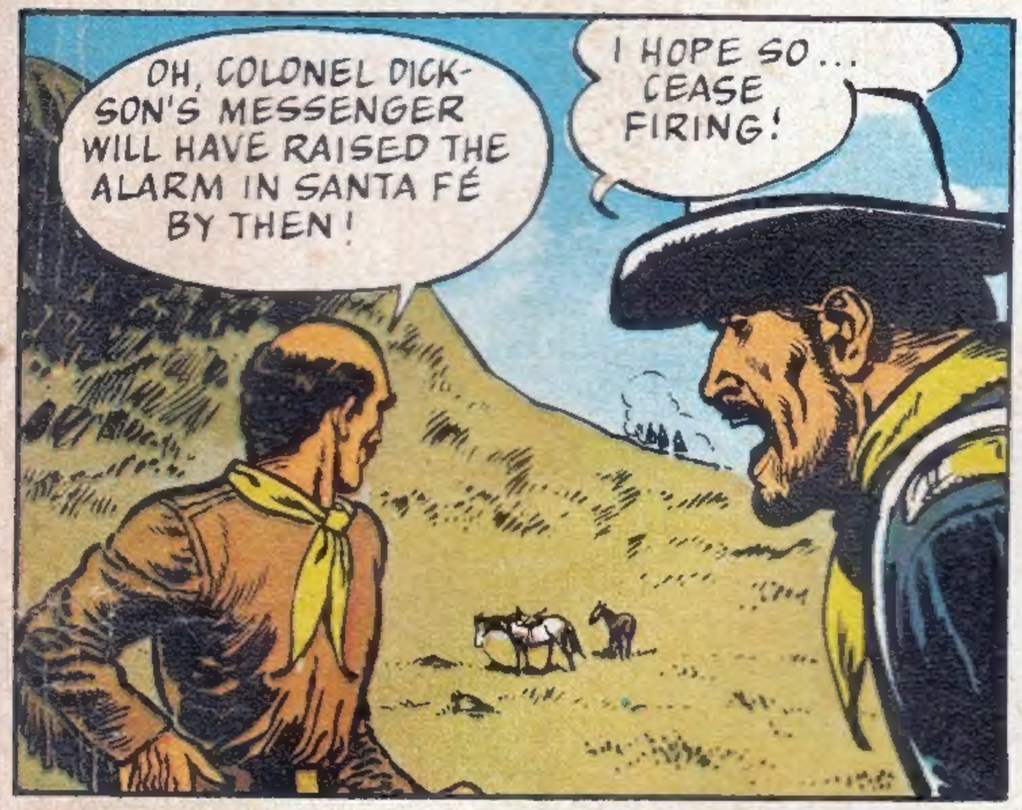

WHEN I GIVE THE WORD, FIRE AT WILL TO COVER OUR MEN AND GET READY TO CLOSE THE GATES AFTER THEM!

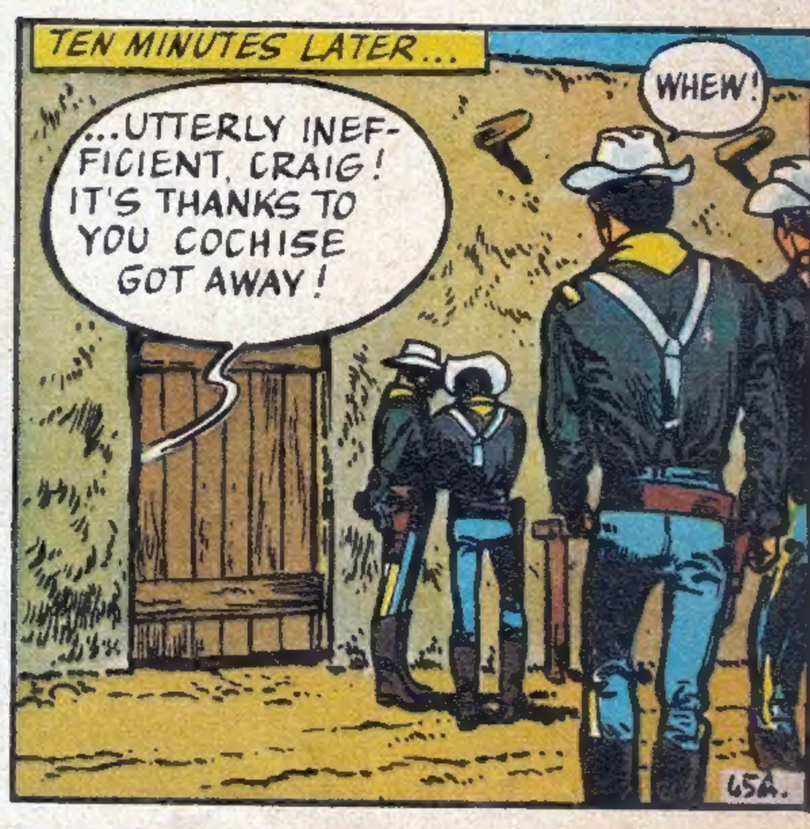

PHEW! JUST IN TIME! ANOTHER TEN YARDS AND MY HORSE WOULD'VE BEEN FINISHED!
COCHISE IS SAFE WITH HIS OWN PEOPLE... WHICH MEANS WE'RE DUE FOR TROUBLE! HE WON'T FORGET THIS TREACHERY!
NOW... FIRE!

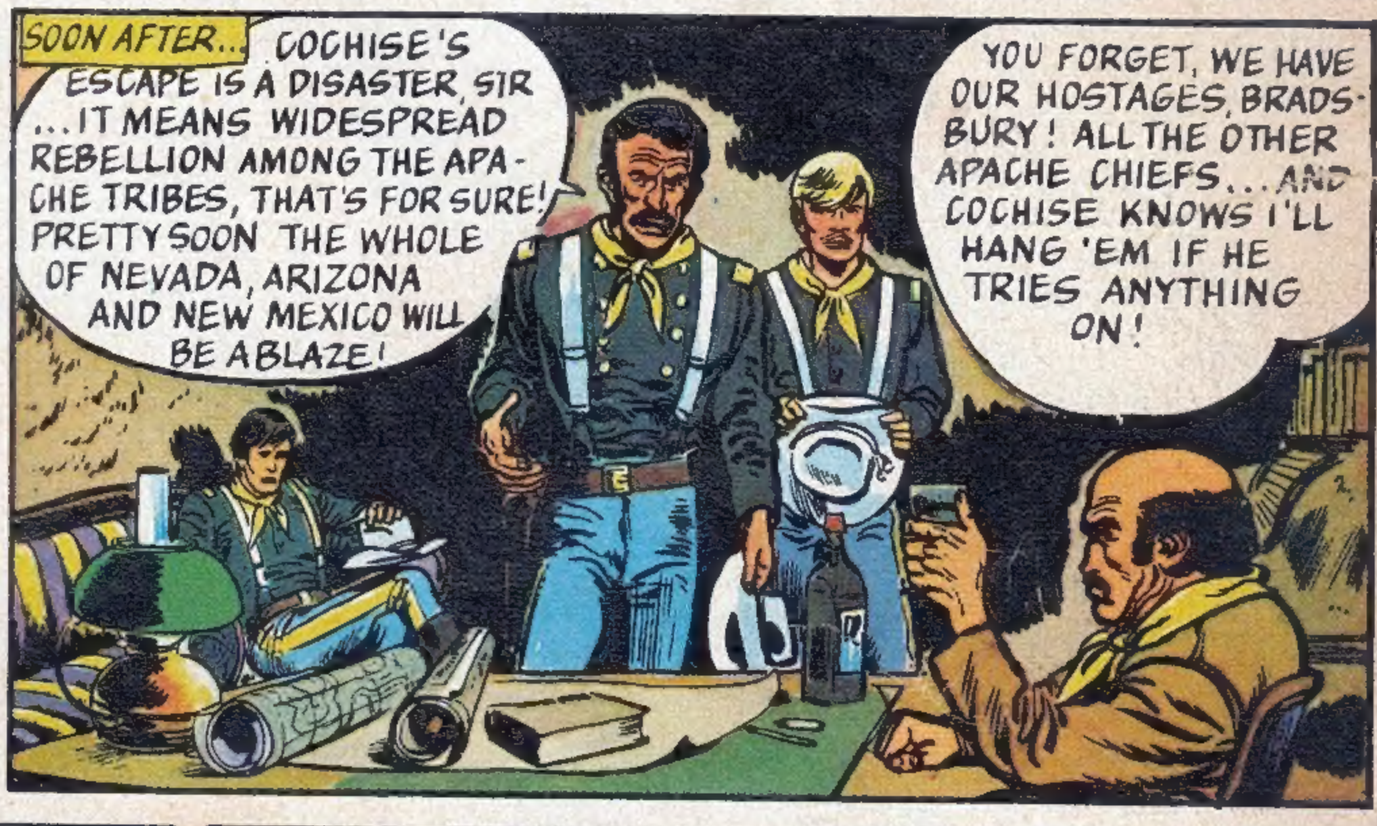
A MURDEROUS VOLLEY MEETS THE APACHES WHO COME HURTLING TOWARDS THE HEAVY GATE. THE REDSKINS TURN AND FLEE FOR THEIR LIVES.

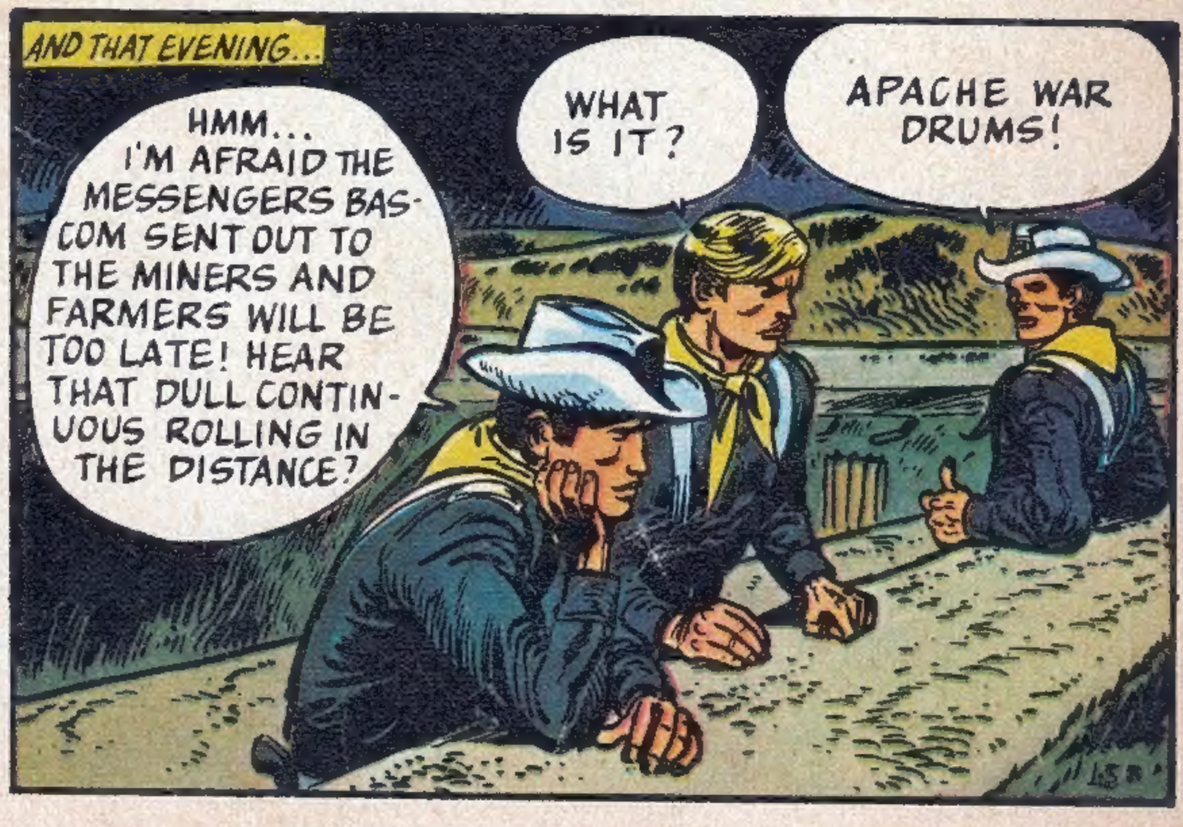
RUNNING? YES...BUT FOR HOW LONG? W'ELL HAVE THOUSANDS OF WARRIORS HERE BEFORE THREE DAYS ARE UP!

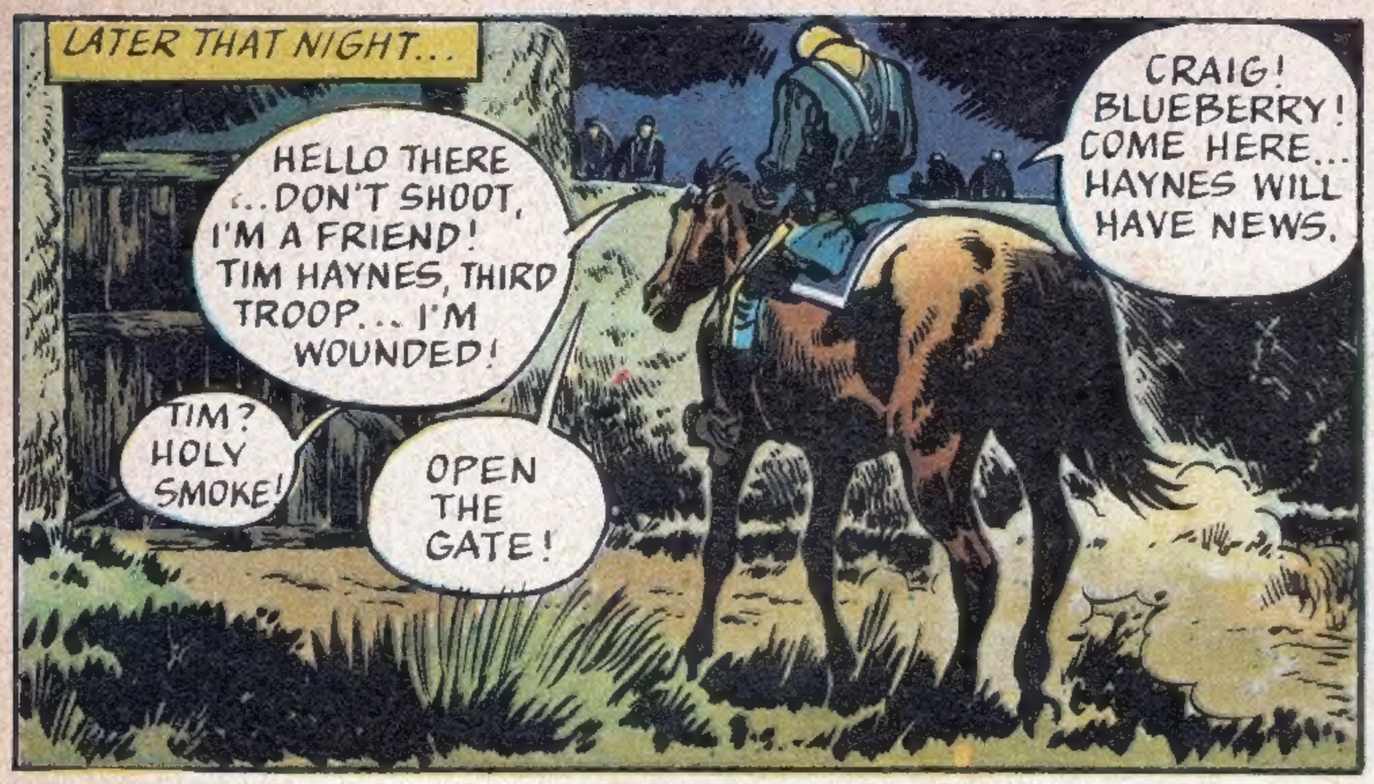
THEY'RE RUNNING! HA! HA! HA!

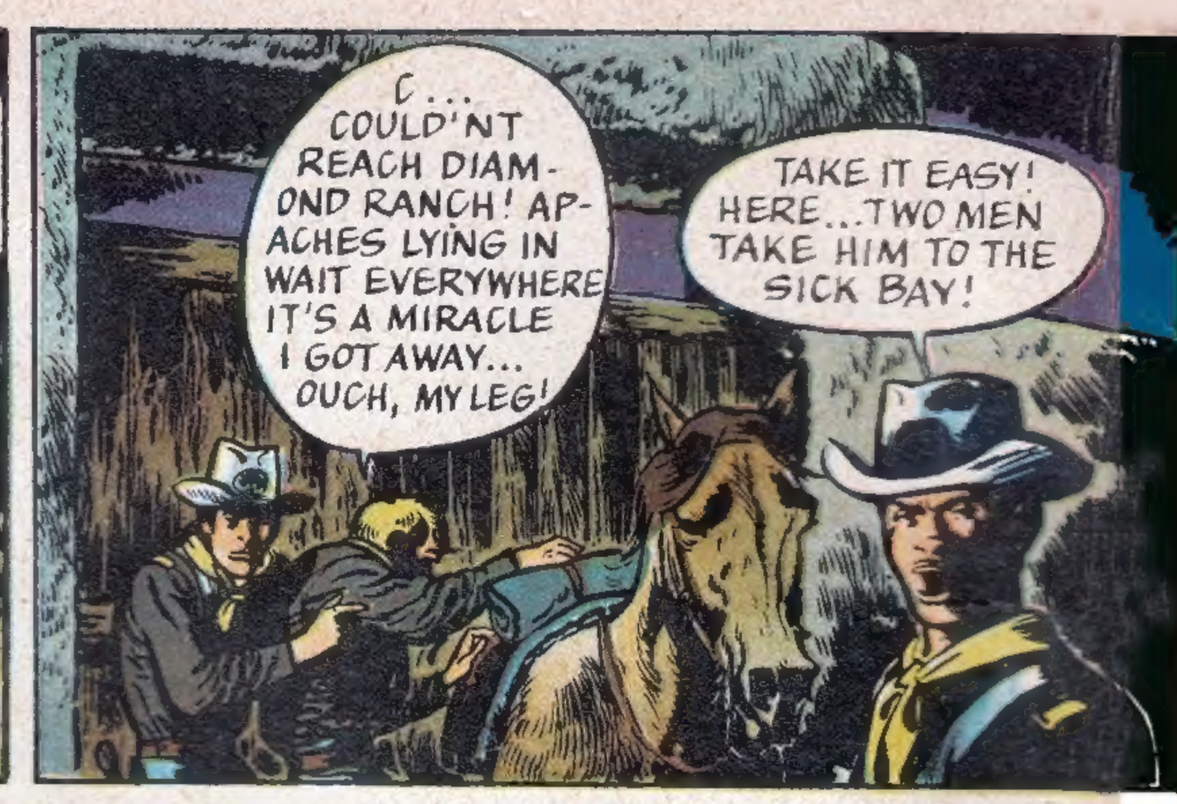


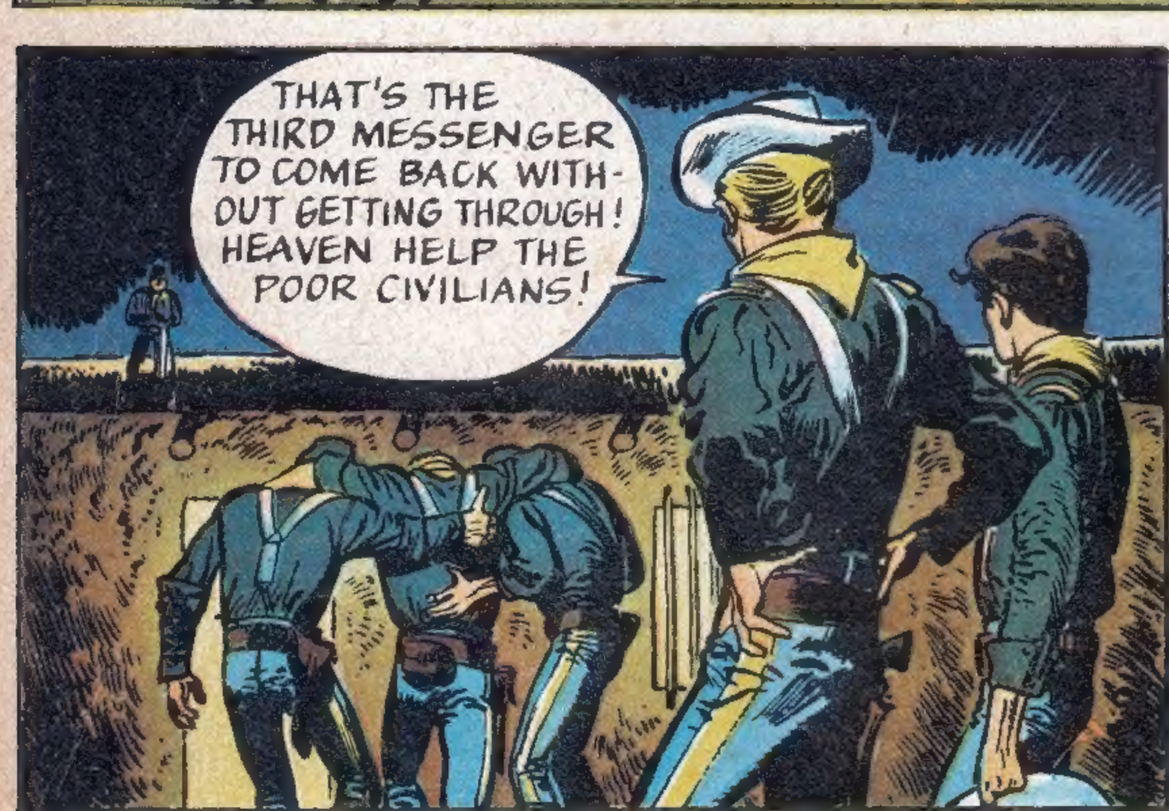


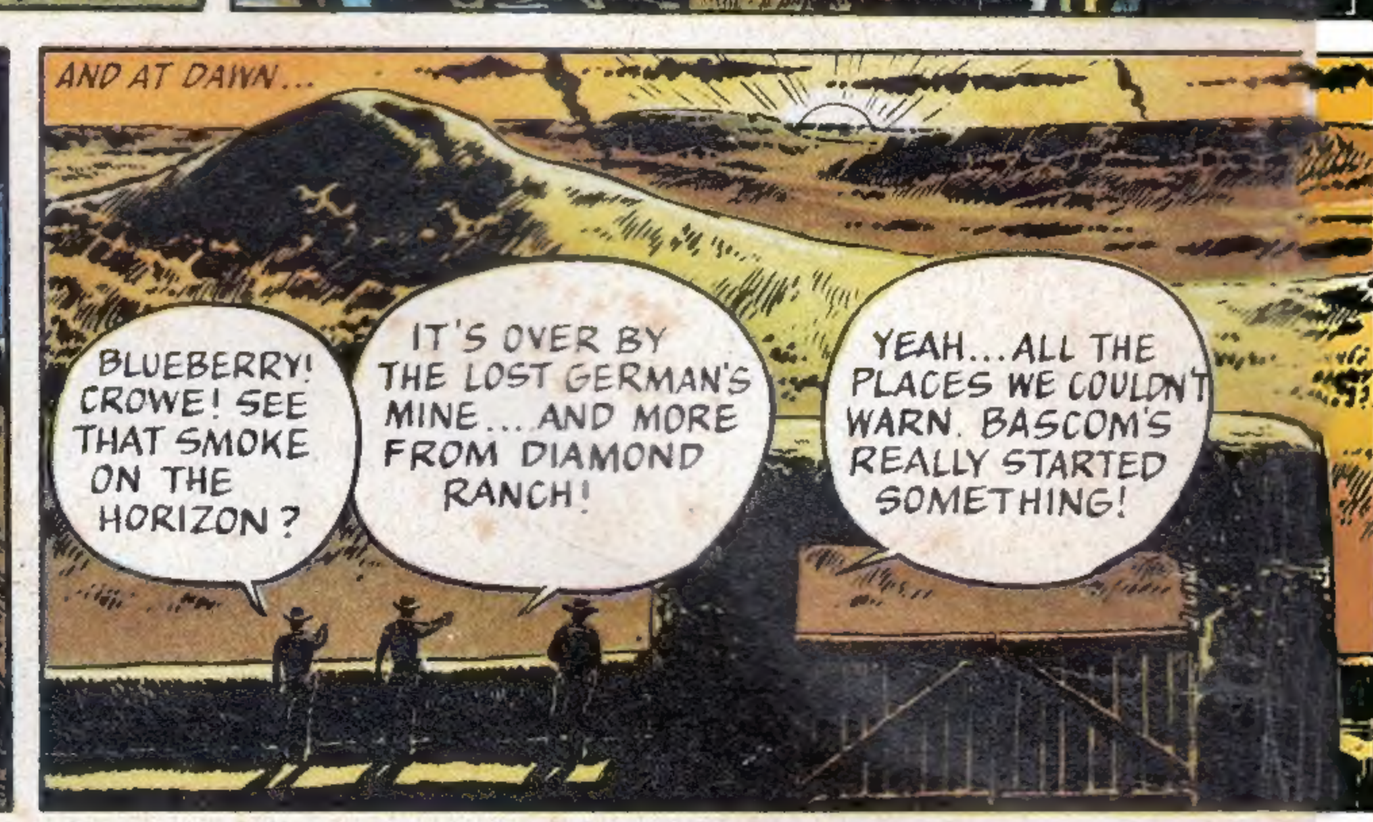





LATER THAT NIGHT...
HELLO THERE ...DON'T SHOOT, I'M A FRIEND! TIM HAYNES, THIRD TROOP... I'M WOUNDED!
CRAIG! BLUEBERRY! COME HERE... HAYNES WILL HAVE NEWS.
TIM? HOLY SMOKE!
OPEN THE GATE!


I... COULD'NT REACH DIAMOND RANCH! APACHES LYING IN WAIT EVERYWHERE IT'S A MIRACLE I GOT AWAY... OUCH, MY LEG!
TAKE IT EASY! HERE...TWO MEN TAKE HIM TO THE SICK BAY!

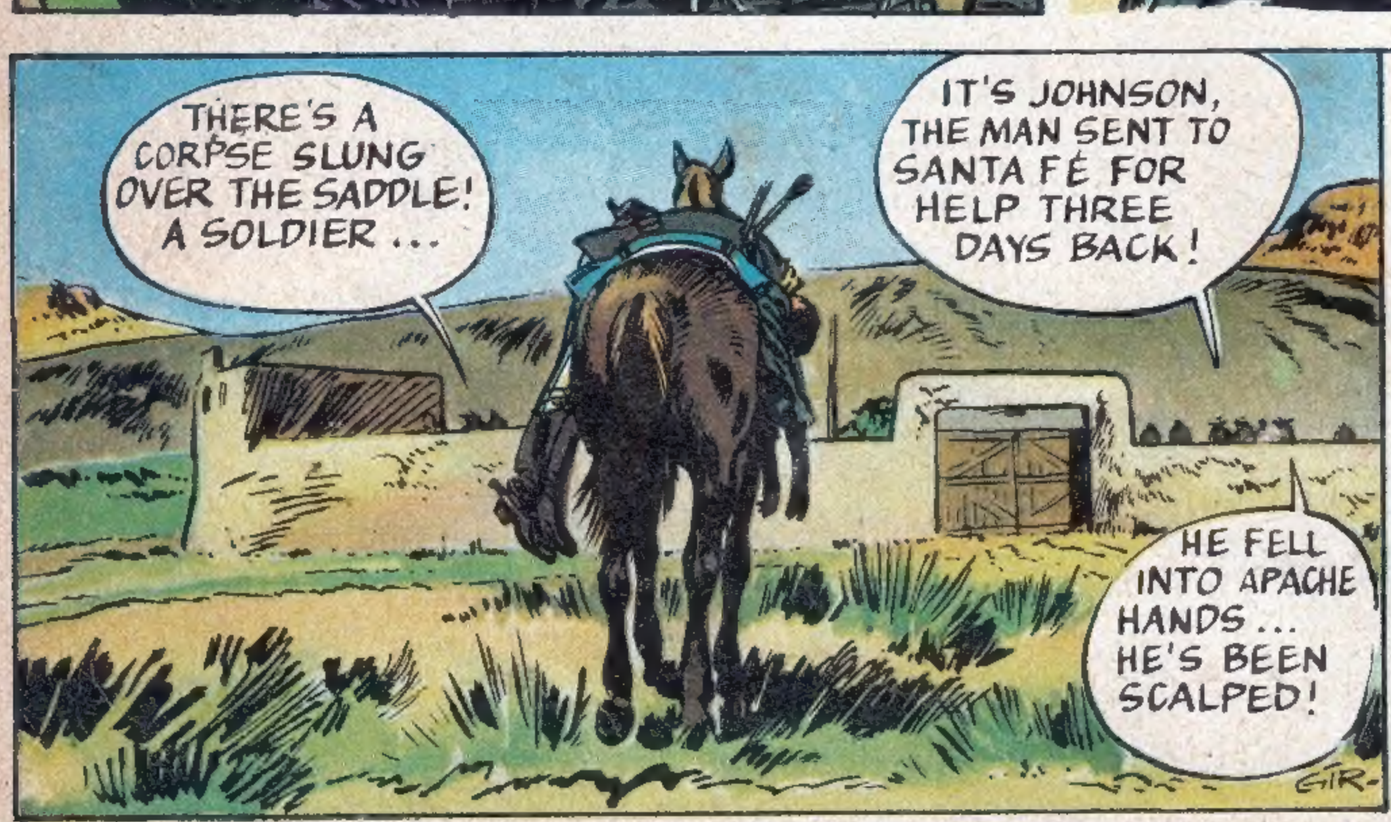

THAT'S THE THIRD MESSENGER TO COME BACK WITHOUT GETTING THROUGH! HEAVEN HELP THE POOR CIVILIANS!


AND AT DAWN...
BLUEBERRY! CROWE! SEE THAT SMOKE ON THE HORIZON?
IT'S OVER BY THE LOST GERMAN'S MINE... AND MORE FROM DIAMOND RANCH!
YEAH...ALL THE PLACES WE COULDN'T WARN. BASCOM'S REALLY STARTED SOMETHING!

LATER
MY GOD, WHAT'S TO BECOME OF US? WITH MY POOR BROTHER SO SICK!
DON'T YOU FRET, MA'AM! A MESSENGER LEFT FOR SANTA FÉ THREE DAYS BACK. HE'LL BRING HELP...
RAISE THE ALARM!

SMALL BAND OF APACHE HORSEMEN, OVER TO THE WEST!

CROWE, WHAT'S UP?
FIVE OR SIX OF THEM... THEY'VE STOPPED... WAIT, THEY'RE SENDING A RIDERLESS HORSE TOWARDS THE FORT. I...


THERE'S A CORPSE SLUNG OVER THE SADDLE! A SOLDIER...
IT'S JOHNSON, THE MAN SENT TO SANTA FÉ FOR HELP THREE DAYS BACK!
HE FELL INTO APACHE HANDS... HE'S BEEN SCALPED!
GIR

WELL THAT JUST ABOUT DOES FOR OUR HOPES OF HELP COMING! WE'RE ON OUR OWN NOW... RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF HOSTILE APACHE TERRITORY!
GOD HELP US ALL!

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